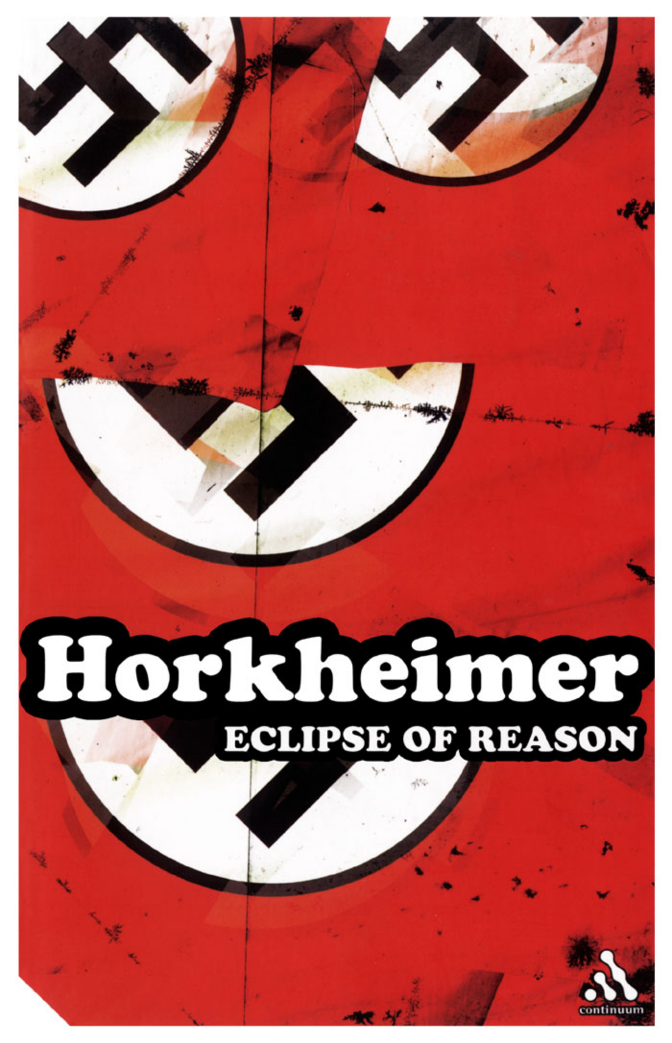
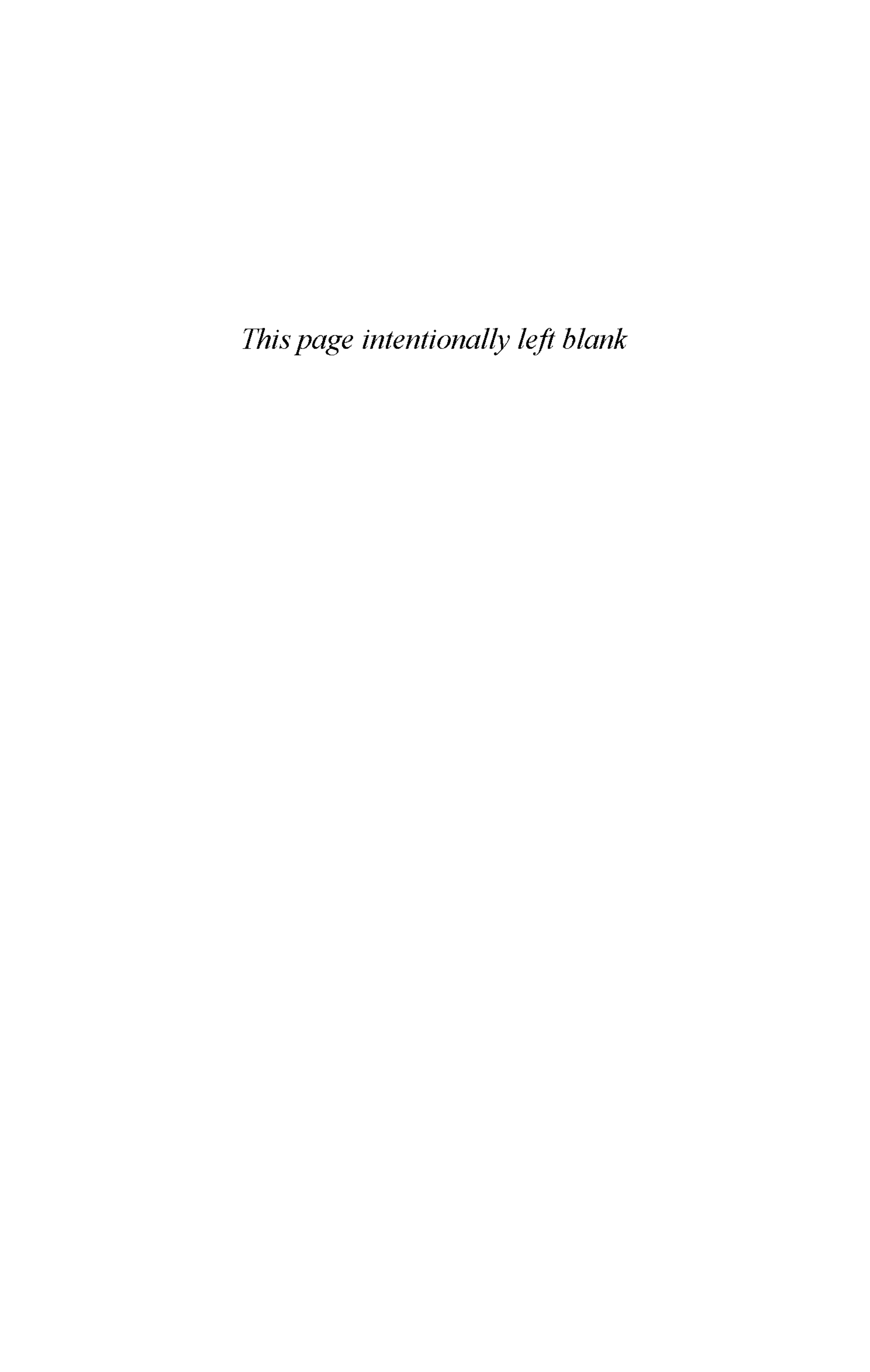

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Max Horkheimer



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Preface

The reflections set forth in this book seek to relate the current *impasse* in philosophical thinking to the concrete dilemma of the human outlook for the future.

The economic and social problems of the present time have had both able and extensive treatment at the hands of other writers in various countries. This book takes a different approach. Its aim is to inquire into the concept of rationality that underlies our contemporary industrial culture, in order to discover whether this concept does not contain defects that vitiate it essentially.

At the moment of this writing, the peoples of the democratic nations are confronted with the problems of consummating their victory of arms. They must work out and put into practice the principles of humanity in the name of which the sacrifices of war were made. The present potentialities of social achievement surpass the expectations of all the philosophers and statesmen who have ever outlined in utopian programs the idea of a truly human society. Yet there is a universal feeling of fear and disillusionment. The hopes of mankind seem to be farther from fulfillment today than they were even in the groping epochs when they were first formulated by humanists. It seems that even as technical knowledge expands the horizon of man's thought and activity, his autonomy as an individual, his ability to resist the growing apparatus of mass manipulation, his power of imagination, his independent judgment appear to be reduced. Advance in technical facilities for enlightenment is accompanied by a process of dehumanization. Thus progress threatens to nullify the very goal it is supposed to realize—the idea of man. Whether

this situation is a necessary phase in the general ascent of society as a whole, or whether it will lead to a victorious re-emergence of the neo-barbarism recently defeated on the battlefields, depends at least in part on our ability to interpret accurately the profound changes now taking place in the public mind and in human nature.

The following pages represent an endeavor to throw some light on the philosophical implications of these changes. To this end it has seemed necessary to discuss some of the prevailing schools of thought as refractions of certain aspects of our civilization. In so doing the author is not trying to suggest anything like a program of action. On the contrary, he believes that the modern propensity to translate every idea into action, or into active abstinence from action, is one of the symptoms of the present cultural crisis: action for action's sake is in no way superior to thought for thought's sake, and is perhaps even inferior to it. As understood and practiced in our civilization, progressive rationalization tends, in my opinion, to obliterate that very substance of reason in the name of which this progress is espoused.

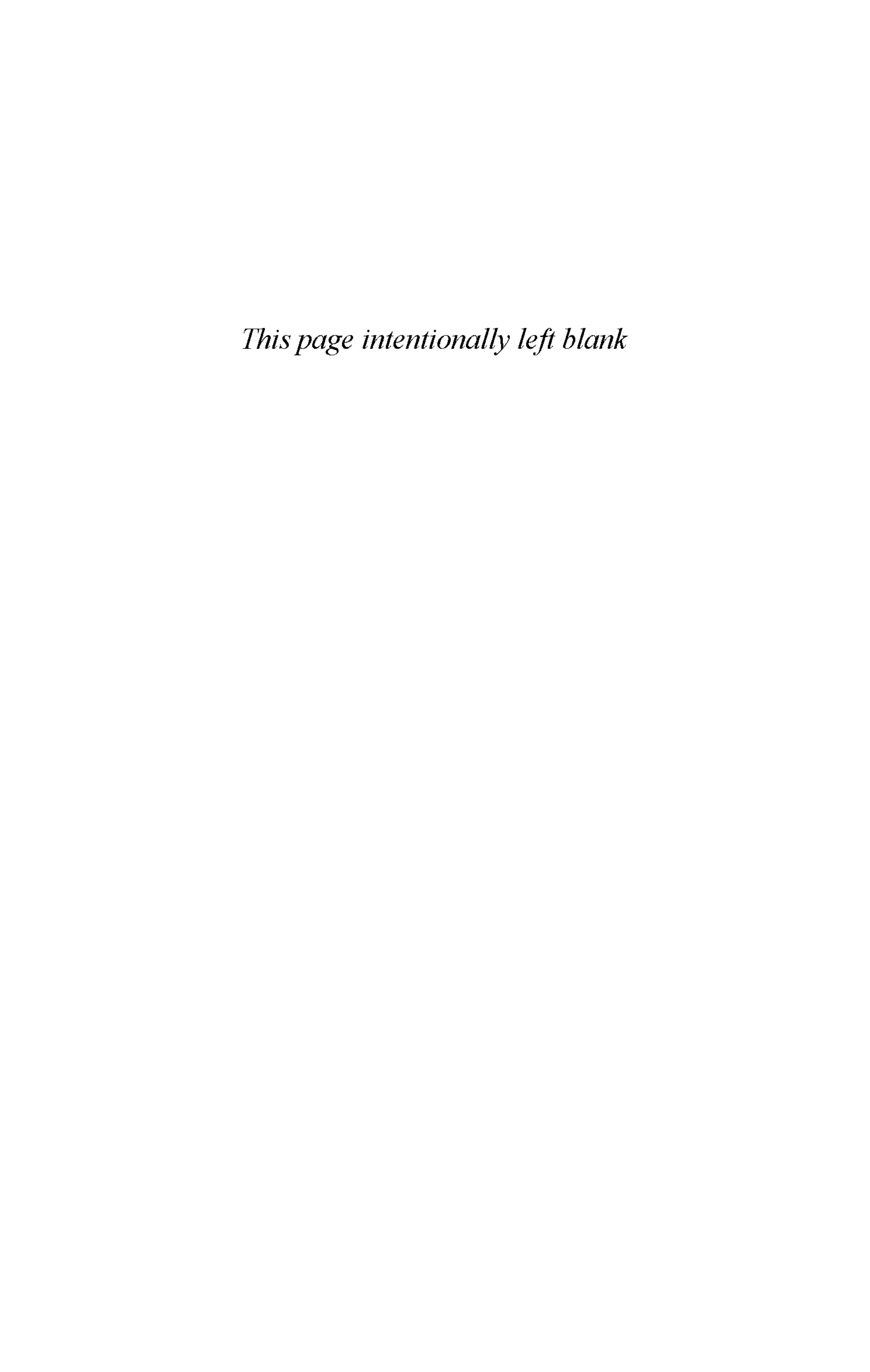
The text of the several chapters of this volume is based in part on a series of public lectures delivered at Columbia University in the spring of 1944. To some extent the presentation reflects the original structure of the lectures rather than an attempt at closer knit organization of the material. These lectures were designed to present in epitome some aspects of a comprehensive philosophical theory developed by the writer during the last few years in association with Theodore W. Adorno. It would be difficult to say which of the ideas originated in his mind and which in my own; our philosophy is one. My friend Leo Lowenthal's indefatigable co-operation and his advice as a sociologist have been an invaluable contribution.

Finally, it is to be set down here, as an abiding recognition, that all of my work would be unthinkable without the material assurance and the intellectual solidarity that I have found in the Institute of Social Research through the last two decades.

Max Horkheimer

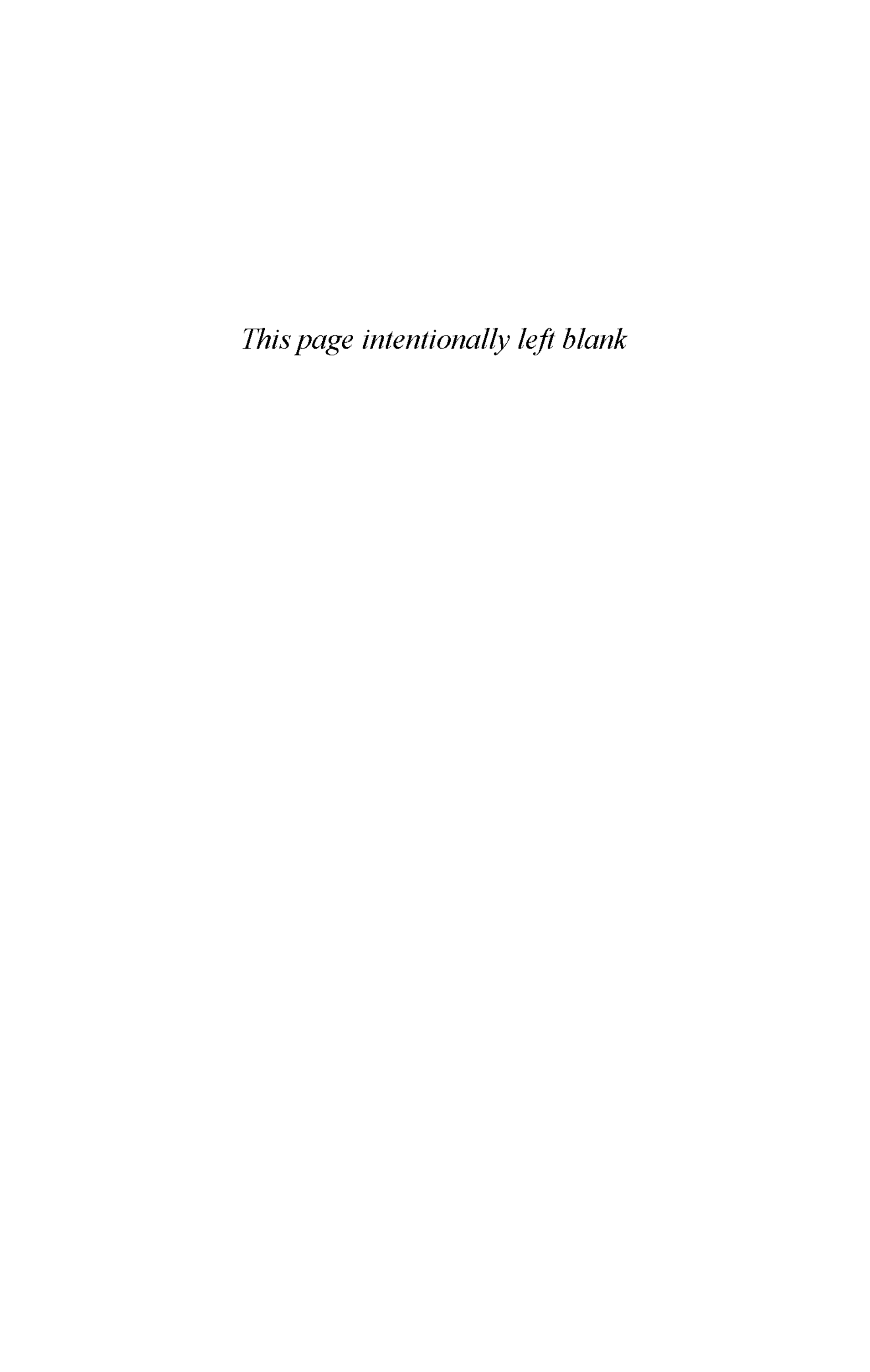
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I

Means and Ends

When the ordinary man is asked to explain what is meant by the term reason, his reaction is almost always one of hesitation and embarrassment. It would be a mistake to interpret this as indicating wisdom too deep or thought too abstruse to be put into words. What it actually betrays is the feeling that there is nothing to inquire into, that the concept of reason is self-explanatory, that the question itself is superfluous. When pressed for an answer, the average man will say that reasonable things are things that are obviously useful, and that every reasonable man is supposed to be able to decide what is useful to him. Naturally the circumstances of each situation, as well as laws, customs, and traditions, should be taken into account. But the force that ultimately makes reasonable actions possible is the faculty of classification, inference, and deduction, no matter what the specific content—the abstract functioning of the thinking mechanism. This type of reason may be called subjective reason. It is essentially concerned with means and ends, with the adequacy of procedures for purposes more or less taken for granted and supposedly self-explanatory. It attaches little importance to the question whether the purposes as such are reasonable. If it concerns itself at all with ends, it takes for granted that they too are reasonable in the subjective sense, *i.e.* that they serve the subject's interest in relation to self-preservation—be it that of the single individual, or of the community on whose maintenance that of the individual depends. The idea that an aim can be reasonable for its own sake—on the basis of virtues that insight reveals it to have in itself—without reference to some kind of subjective gain or advantage, is utterly alien to subjective reason, even where it rises

above the consideration of immediate utilitarian values and devotes itself to reflections about the social order as a whole.

However naive or superficial this definition of reason may seem, it is an important symptom of a profound change of outlook that has taken place in Western thinking in the course of the last centuries. For a long time, a diametrically opposite view of reason was prevalent. This view asserted the existence of reason as a force not only in the individual mind but also in the objective world—in relations among human beings and between social classes, in social institutions, and in nature and its manifestations. Great philosophical systems, such as those of Plato and Aristotle, scholasticism, and German idealism were founded on an objective theory of reason. It aimed at evolving a comprehensive system, or hierarchy, of all beings, including man and his aims. The degree of reasonableness of a man's life could be determined according to its harmony with this totality. Its objective structure, and not just man and his purposes, was to be the measuring rod for individual thoughts and actions. This concept of reason never precluded subjective reason, but regarded the latter as only a partial, limited expression of a universal rationality from which criteria for all things and beings were derived. The emphasis was on ends rather than on means. The supreme endeavor of this kind of thinking was to reconcile the objective order of the 'reasonable,' as philosophy conceived it, with human existence, including self-interest and self-preservation. Plato, for instance, undertakes in his *Republic* to prove that he who lives in the light of objective reason also lives a successful and happy life. The theory of objective reason did not focus on the co-ordination of behavior and aim, but on concepts—however mythological they sound to us today—on the idea of the greatest good, on the problem of human destiny, and on the way of realization of ultimate goals.

There is a fundamental difference between this theory, according to which reason is a principle inherent in reality, and the doctrine that reason is a subjective faculty of the mind. According to the latter, the subject alone can genuinely have reason: if we say that an institution or any other reality is reasonable, we usually mean that men have organized it reasonably, that they have applied to it, in a more or less technical way, their logical, calculative capacity. Ultimately subjective reason proves to be the ability to calculate probabilities and thereby to co-ordinate the right means with a given end. This definition seems to be in harmony with the ideas of many outstanding philosophers, particularly of English thinkers since the days of John Locke. Of course, Locke did not overlook other

mental functions that might fall into the same category, for example discernment and reflection. But these functions certainly contribute to the co-ordination of means and ends, which is, after all, the social concern of science and, in a way, the *raison d'être* of theory in the social process of production.

In the subjectivist view, when 'reason' is used to connote a thing or an idea rather than an act, it refers exclusively to the relation of such an object or concept to a purpose, not to the object or concept itself. It means that the thing or the idea is good for something else. There is no reasonable aim as such, and to discuss the superiority of one aim over another in terms of reason becomes meaningless. From the subjective approach, such a discussion is possible only if both aims serve a third and higher one, that is, if they are means, not ends.*

The relation between these two concepts of reason is not merely one of opposition. Historically, both the subjective and the objective aspect of reason have been present from the outset, and the predominance of the former over the latter was achieved in the course of a long process. Reason in its proper sense of *logos*, or *ratio*, has always been essentially related to the subject, his faculty of thinking. All the terms denoting it were once subjective expressions; thus the Greek term stems from λέγειν, 'to say,' denoting the subjective faculty of speech. The subjective faculty of thinking was the critical agent that dissolved superstition. But in denouncing mythology as false objectivity, i.e. as a creation of the subject, it had to use concepts that it recognized as adequate. Thus it always developed an objectivity of its own. In Platonism, the Pythagorean theory of numbers,

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*The difference between this connotation of reason and the objectivistic conception resembles to a certain degree the difference between functional and substantial rationality as these words are used in the Max Weber school. Max Weber, however, adhered so definitely to the subjectivistic trend that he did not conceive of any rationality—not even a 'substantial' one by which man can discriminate one end from another. If our drives, intentions, and finally our ultimate decisions must *a priori* be irrational, substantial reason becomes an agency merely of correlation and is therefore itself essentially 'functional.' Although Weber's own and his followers' descriptions of the bureaucratization and monopolization of knowledge have illuminated much of the social aspect of the transition from objective to subjective reason (cf. particularly the analyses of Karl Mannheim in *Man and Society*, London, 1940), Max Weber's pessimism with regard to the possibility of rational insight and action, as expressed in his philosophy (cf., e.g., 'Wissenschaft als Beruf,' in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen, 1922), is itself a stepping-stone in the renunciation of philosophy and science as regards their aspiration of defining man's goal.

which originated in astral mythology, was transformed into the theory of ideas that attempts to define the supreme content of thinking as an absolute objectivity ultimately beyond, though related to, the faculty of thinking. The present crisis of reason consists fundamentally in the fact that at a certain point thinking either became incapable of conceiving such objectivity at all or began to negate it as a delusion. This process was gradually extended to include the objective content of every rational concept. In the end, no particular reality can seem reasonable *per se*; all the basic concepts, emptied of their content, have come to be only formal shells. As reason is subjectivized, it also becomes formalized.*

The formalization of reason has far-reaching theoretical and practical implications. If the subjectivist view holds true, thinking cannot be of any help in determining the desirability of any goal in itself. The acceptability of ideals, the criteria for our actions and beliefs, the leading principles of ethics and politics, all our ultimate decisions are made to depend upon factors other than reason. They are supposed to be matters of choice and predilection, and it has become meaningless to speak of truth in making practical, moral, or esthetic decisions. 'A judgment of fact,' says Russell,† one of the most objectivist thinkers among subjectivists, 'is capable of a property called "truth," which it has or does not have quite independently of what any one may think about it. . . . But . . . I see no property, analogous to "truth," that belongs or does not belong to an ethical judgment. This, it must be admitted, puts ethics in a different category from science.' However, Russell, more than others, is aware of the difficulties in which such a theory necessarily becomes involved. 'An inconsistent system may well contain less falsehood than a consistent one.'‡ Despite his philosophy, which holds 'ultimate ethical values to be subjective,'§ he seems to differentiate between the objective moral qualities of human actions and our perception of them: 'What is horrible I will see as horrible.' He has the courage of inconsistency and thus, by disavowing certain aspects of his anti-dialectical logic, remains indeed a philosopher and a humanist at the same time. If he were to cling to his scientistic theory consistently, he would have to admit that there are no horrible actions or inhuman conditions, and that the evil he sees is just an illusion.

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*The terms subjectivization and formalization, though in many respects not identical in meaning, will be used as practically equivalent throughout this book.

†'Reply to Criticisms,' in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*, Chicago, 1944, p. 723.

‡Ibid. p. 720.

§Ibid.

According to such theories, thought serves any particular endeavor, good or bad. It is a tool of all actions of society, but it must not try to set the patterns of social and individual life, which are assumed to be set by other forces. In lay discussion as well as in scientific, reason has come to be commonly regarded as an intellectual faculty of co-ordination, the efficiency of which can be increased by methodical use and by the removal of any non-intellectual factors, such as conscious or unconscious emotions. Reason has never really directed social reality, but now reason has been so thoroughly purged of any specific trend or preference that it has finally renounced even the task of passing judgment on man's actions and way of life. Reason has turned them over for ultimate sanction to the conflicting interests to which our world actually seems abandoned.

This relegation of reason to a subordinate position is in sharp contrast to the ideas of the pioneers of bourgeois civilization, the spiritual and political representatives of the rising middle class, who were unanimous in declaring that reason plays a leading role in human behavior, perhaps even the predominant role. They defined a wise legislature as one whose laws conform to reason; national and international policies were judged according to whether they followed the lines of reason. Reason was supposed to regulate our preferences and our relations with other human beings and with nature. It was thought of as an entity, a spiritual power living in each man. This power was held to be the supreme arbiter—nay, more, the creative force behind the ideas and things to which we should devote our lives.

Today, when you are summoned into a traffic court, and the judge asks you whether your driving was reasonable, he means: Did you do everything in your power to protect your own and other people's lives and property, and to obey the law? He implicitly assumes that these values must be respected. What he questions is merely the adequacy of your behavior in terms of these generally recognized standards. In most cases, to be reasonable means not to be obstinate, which in turn points to conformity with reality as it is. The principle of adjustment is taken for granted. When the idea of reason was conceived, it was intended to achieve more than the mere regulation of the relation between means and ends: it was regarded as the instrument for understanding the ends, *for determining them*. Socrates died because he subjected the most sacred and most familiar ideas of his community and his country to the critique of the daimonion, or dialectical thought, as Plato called it. In doing so, he fought against both ideologic conservatism and relativism masked as

progressiveness but actually subordinated to personal and professional interests. In other words, he fought against the subjective, formalistic reason advocated by the other Sophists. He undermined the sacred tradition of Greece, the Athenian way of life, thus preparing the soil for radically different forms of individual and social life. Socrates held that reason, conceived as universal insight, should determine beliefs, regulate relations between man and man, and between man and nature.

Although his doctrine might be considered the philosophical origin of the concept of the subject as ultimate judge of good and evil, he spoke of reason and of its verdicts not as mere names or conventions, but as reflecting the true nature of things. As negativistic as his teachings may have been, they implied the idea of absolute truth and were put forward as objective insights, almost as revelations. His daimonion was a more spiritual god, but he was not less real than the other gods were believed to be. His name was supposed to denote a living force. In Plato's philosophy the Socratic power of intuition or conscience, the new god within the individual subject, has dethroned or at least transformed his rivals in Greek mythology. They have become ideas. There is no question whether they are simply his creatures, products or contents similar to the sensations of the subject according to the theory of subjective idealism. On the contrary, they still preserve some of the prerogatives of the old gods: they occupy a higher and nobler sphere than humans, they are models, they are immortal. The daimonion in turn has changed into the soul, and the soul is the eye that can perceive the ideas. It reveals itself as the vision of truth or as the individual subject's faculty to perceive the eternal order of things and consequently the line of action that must be followed in the temporal order.

The term objective reason thus on the one hand denotes as its essence a structure inherent in reality that by itself calls for a specific mode of behavior in each specific case, be it a practical or a theoretical attitude. This structure is accessible to him who takes upon himself the effort of dialectical thinking, or, identically, who is capable of *eros*. On the other hand, the term objective reason may also designate this very effort and ability to reflect such an objective order. Everybody is familiar with situations that by their very nature, and quite apart from the interests of the subject, call for a definite line of action—for example, a child or an animal on the verge of drowning, a starving population, or an individual illness. Each of these situations speaks, as it were, a language of itself. However, since they are only segments of reality, each of them may have to be

neglected because there are more comprehensive structures demanding other lines of action equally independent of personal wishes and interests.

The philosophical systems of objective reason implied the conviction that an all-embracing or fundamental structure of being could be discovered and a conception of human destination derived from it. They understood science, when worthy of this name, as an implementation of such reflection or speculation. They were opposed to any epistemology that would reduce the objective basis of our insight to a chaos of uncoordinated data, and identify our scientific work as the mere organization, classification, or computation of such data. The latter activities, in which subjective reason tends to see the main function of science, are in the light of the classical systems of objective reason subordinate to speculation. Objective reason aspires to replace traditional religion with methodical philosophical thought and insight and thus to become a source of tradition all by itself. Its attack on mythology is perhaps more serious than that of subjective reason, which, abstract and formalistic as it conceives itself to be, is inclined to abandon the fight with religion by setting up two different brackets, one for science and philosophy, and one for institutionalized mythology, thus recognizing both of them. For the philosophy of objective reason there is no such way out. Since it holds to the concept of objective truth, it must take a positive or a negative stand with regard to the content of established religion. Therefore the critique of social beliefs in the name of objective reason is much more portentous—although it is sometimes less direct and aggressive—than that put forward in the name of subjective reason.

In modern times, reason has displayed a tendency to dissolve its own objective content. It is true that in sixteenth-century France the concept of a life dominated by reason as the ultimate agency was again advanced. Montaigne adapted it to individual life, Bodin to the life of nations, and De l'Hôpital practiced it in politics. Despite certain skeptical declarations on their part, their work furthered the abdication of religion in favor of reason as the supreme intellectual authority. At that time, however, reason acquired a new connotation, which found its highest expression in French literature and in some degree is still preserved in modern popular usage. It came to signify a conciliatory attitude. Differences over religion, which with the decline of the medieval church had become the favorite ground on which to thrash out opposing political tendencies, were no longer taken seriously, and no creed or ideology was considered worth defending to the death. This concept of reason was doubtless more

humane but at the same time weaker than the religious concept of truth, more pliable to prevailing interests, more adaptable to reality as it is, and therewith from the very beginning in danger of surrendering to the 'irrational.'

Reason now denoted the point of view of scholars, statesmen, and humanists, who deemed the conflicts in religious doctrine more or less meaningless in themselves and looked upon them as slogans or propaganda devices of various political factions. To the humanists there was no incongruity about a people living under one government, within given boundaries, and yet professing different religions. Such a government had purely secular purposes. It was not intended, as Luther thought, to discipline and castigate the human beast, but to create favorable conditions for commerce and industry, to solidify law and order, to assure its citizens peace inside and protection outside the country. With regard to the individual, reason now played the same part as that held in politics by the sovereign state, which was concerned with the well-being of the people and opposed to fanaticism and civil war.

The divorce of reason from religion marked a further step in the weakening of its objective aspect and a higher degree of formalization, as became manifest later during the period of the Enlightenment. But in the seventeenth century the objective aspect of reason still predominated, because the main effort of rationalist philosophy was to formulate a doctrine of man and nature that could fulfil the intellectual function, at least for the privileged sector of society, that religion had formerly fulfilled. From the time of the Renaissance, men have tried to excogitate a doctrine as comprehensive as theology entirely on their own, instead of accepting their ultimate goals and values from a spiritual authority. Philosophy prided itself on being the instrument for deriving, explaining, revealing the content of reason as reflecting the true nature of things and the correct pattern of living. Spinoza, for example, thought that insight into the essence of reality, into the harmonious structure of the eternal universe, necessarily awakens love for this universe. For him, ethical conduct is entirely determined by such insight into nature, just as our devotion to a person may be determined by insight into his greatness or genius. Fears and petty passions, alien to the great love of the universe, which is *logos* itself, will vanish, according to Spinoza, once our understanding of reality is deep enough.

The other great rationalist systems of the past also emphasize that reason will recognize itself in the nature of things, and that the right

human attitude springs from such insight. This attitude is not necessarily the same for every individual, because the situation of each is unique. There are geographical and historical differences, as well as differences of age, sex, skill, social status, et cetera. However, such insight is universal in so far as its logical connection with the attitude is theoretically self-evident for each imaginable subject endowed with intelligence. Under the philosophy of reason, insight into the plight of an enslaved people, for instance, might induce a young man to fight for its liberation, but would allow his father to stay at home and till the land. Despite such differences in its consequences, the logical nature of this insight is felt to be intelligible to all people in general.

Although these rationalist philosophical systems did not command as wide allegiance as religion had claimed, they were appreciated as efforts to record the meaning and exigencies of reality and to present truths that are binding for everybody. Their authors thought that the *lumen naturale,* natural insight or the light of reason, was sufficient also to penetrate so deeply into creation as to provide us with keys for harmonizing human life with nature both in the external world and within man's own being. They retained God, but not grace; they thought that for all purposes of theoretical knowledge and practical decision, man could do without any *lumen supranaturale.* Their speculative reproductions of the universe, not the sensualistic epistemologies—Giordano Bruno and not Telesio, Spinoza and not Locke—clashed directly with traditional religion, because the intellectual aspirations of the metaphysicians were much more concerned with the doctrines of God, creation, and the meaning of life than were the theories of the empiricists.

In the philosophical and political systems of rationalism, Christian ethics was secularized. The aims pursued in individual and social activity were derived from the assumption of the existence of certain innate ideas or self-evident intuitions, and thus linked to the concept of objective truth, although this truth was no longer regarded as being guaranteed by any dogma extraneous to the exigencies of thinking itself. Neither the church nor the rising philosophical systems separated wisdom, ethics, religion, and politics. But the fundamental unity of all human beliefs, rooted in a common Christian ontology, was gradually shattered, and the relativist tendencies that had been explicit in the pioneers of bourgeois ideology such as Montaigne, but had later been temporarily pushed into the background by rationalist metaphysics, asserted themselves victoriously in all cultural activities.

Of course, as suggested above, when philosophy began to supplant religion, it did not intend to abolish objective truth, but was attempting only to give it a new rational foundation. The contention in regard to the nature of the absolute was not the main ground on which metaphysicians were persecuted and tortured. The real issue was whether revelation or reason, whether theology or philosophy, should be the agency for determining and expressing ultimate truth. Just as the church defended the ability, the right, the duty of religion to teach the people how the world was created, what its purpose is, and how they should behave, so philosophy defended the ability, the right, the duty of the mind to discover the nature of things and to derive the right modes of activity from such insight. Catholicism and European rationalist philosophy were in complete agreement regarding the existence of a reality about which such insight could be gained; indeed, the assumption of this reality was the common ground on which their conflicts took place.

The two intellectual forces that were at odds with this particular presupposition were Calvinism, through its doctrine of *Deus absconditus,* and empiricism, through its notion, first implicit and later explicit, that metaphysics is concerned exclusively with pseudo-problems. But the Catholic Church opposed philosophy precisely because the new metaphysical systems asserted the possibility of an insight that should itself determine the moral and religious decisions of man.

Eventually the active controversy between religion and philosophy ended in a stalemate because the two were considered as separate branches of culture. People have gradually become reconciled to the idea that each lives its own life within the walls of its cultural compartment, tolerating the other. The neutralization of religion, now reduced to the status of one cultural good among others, contradicted its 'total' claim that it incorporates objective truth, and also emasculated it. Although religion remained respected on the surface, its neutralization paved the way for its elimination as the medium of spiritual objectivity and ultimately for the abolition of the concept of such an objectivity, itself patterned after the idea of the absoluteness of religious revelation.

In reality the contents of both philosophy and religion have been deeply affected by this seemingly peaceful settlement of their original conflict. The philosophers of the Enlightenment attacked religion in the name of reason; in the end what they killed was not the church but metaphysics and the objective concept of reason itself, the source of power of their own

efforts. Reason as an organ for perceiving the true nature of reality and determining the guiding principles of our lives has come to be regarded as obsolete. Speculation is synonymous with metaphysics, and metaphysics with mythology and superstition. We might say that the history of reason or enlightenment from its beginnings in Greece down to the present has led to a state of affairs in which even the word reason is suspected of connoting some mythological entity. Reason has liquidated itself as an agency of ethical, moral, and religious insight. Bishop Berkeley, legitimate son of nominalism, Protestant zealot, and positivist enlightener all in one, directed an attack against such general concepts, including the concept of a general concept, two hundred years ago. In fact, the campaign has been victorious all along the line. Berkeley, in partial contradiction of his own theory, retained a few general concepts, such as mind, spirit, and cause. But they were efficiently eliminated by Hume, the father of modern positivism.

Religion seemingly profited from this development. The formalization of reason has made it safe from any serious attack on the part of metaphysics or philosophical theory, and this security seems to make it an extremely practical social instrument. At the same time, however, its neutrality means the wasting away of its real spirit, its relatedness to truth, once believed to be the same in science, art, and politics, and for all mankind. The death of speculative reason, at first religion's servant and later its foe, may prove catastrophic for religion itself.

All these consequences were contained in germ in the bourgeois idea of tolerance, which is ambivalent. On the one hand, tolerance means freedom from the rule of dogmatic authority; on the other, it furthers an attitude of neutrality toward all spiritual content, which is thus surrendered to relativism. Each cultural domain preserves its 'sovereignty' with regard to universal truth. The pattern of the social division of labor is automatically transferred to the life of the spirit, and this division of the realm of culture is a corollary to the replacement of universal objective truth by formalized, inherently relativist reason.

The political implications of rationalist metaphysics came to the fore in the eighteenth century, when, through the American and French revolutions, the concept of the nation became a guiding principle. In modern history this concept has tended to displace religion as the ultimate, supra-individual motive in human life. The nation draws its authority from reason rather than from revelation, reason being thus conceived as an aggregate of fundamental insights, innate or developed by speculation,

not as an agency concerned merely with the means for putting them into effect.

Self-interest, on which certain theories of natural law and hedonistic philosophies have tried to place primary emphasis, was held to be only one such insight, regarded as rooted in the objective structure of the universe and thus forming a part in the whole system of categories. In the industrial age, the idea of self-interest gradually gained the upper hand and finally suppressed the other motives considered fundamental to the functioning of society; this attitude dominated in the leading schools of thought and, during the liberalistic period, in the public mind. But the same process brought to the surface the contradictions between the theory of self-interest and the idea of the nation. Philosophy then was confronted with the alternative of accepting the anarchistic consequences of this theory or of falling prey to an irrational nationalism much more tainted with romanticism than were the theories of innate ideas that prevailed in the mercantilist period.

The intellectual imperialism of the abstract principle of self-interest—the core of the official ideology of liberalism—indicated the growing schism between this ideology and social conditions within the industrialized nations. Once the cleavage becomes fixed in the public mind, no effective rational principle of social cohesion remains. The idea of the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), first set up as an idol, can eventually be maintained only by terror. This explains the tendency of liberalism to tilt over into fascism and of the intellectual and political representatives of liberalism to make their peace with its opposites. This tendency, so often demonstrated in recent European history, can be derived, apart from its economic causes, from the inner contradiction between the subjectivistic principle of self-interest and the idea of reason that it is alleged to express. Originally the political constitution was thought of as an expression of concrete principles founded in objective reason; the ideas of justice, equality, happiness, democracy, property, all were held to correspond to reason, to emanate from reason. Subsequently, the content of reason is reduced arbitrarily to the scope of merely a part of this content, to the frame of only one of its principles; the particular pre-empts the place of the universal. This *tour de force* in the realm of the intellectual lays the ground for the rule of force in the domain of the political.

Having given up autonomy, reason has become an instrument. In the formalistic aspect of subjective reason, stressed by positivism, its

unrelatedness to objective content is emphasized; in its instrumental aspect, stressed by pragmatism, its surrender to heteronomous contents is emphasized. Reason has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion. Concepts have been reduced to summaries of the characteristics that several specimens have in common. By denoting a similarity, concepts eliminate the bother of enumerating qualities and thus serve better to organize the material of knowledge. They are thought of as mere abbreviations of the items to which they refer. Any use transcending auxiliary, technical summarization of factual data has been eliminated as a last trace of superstition. Concepts have become 'streamlined,' rationalized, labor-saving devices. It is as if thinking itself had been reduced to the level of industrial processes, subjected to a close schedule—in short, made part and parcel of production. Toynbee* has described some of the consequences of this process for the writing of history. He speaks of the 'tendency for the potter to become the slave of his clay. . . . In the world of action, we know that it is disastrous to treat animals or human beings as though they were stocks and stones. Why should we suppose this treatment to be any less mistaken in the world of ideas?'

The more ideas have become automatic, instrumentalized, the less does anybody see in them thoughts with a meaning of their own. They are considered things, machines. Language has been reduced to just another tool in the gigantic apparatus of production in modern society. Every sentence that is not equivalent to an operation in that apparatus appears to the layman just as meaningless as it is held to be by contemporary semanticists who imply that the purely symbolic and operational, that is, the purely senseless sentence, makes sense. Meaning is supplanted by function or effect in the world of things and events. In so far as words are not used obviously to calculate technically relevant probabilities or for other practical purposes, among which even relaxation is included, they are in danger of being suspect as sales talk of some kind, for truth is no end in itself.

In the era of relativism, when even children look upon ideas as advertisements or rationalizations, the very fear that language might still harbor mythological residues has endowed words with a new mythological character. True, ideas have been radically functionalized and language is

* *A Study of History*, 2d ed., London, 1935, vol. I, p. 7.

considered a mere tool, be it for the storage and communication of the intellectual elements of production or for the guidance of the masses. At the same time, language takes its revenge, as it were, by reverting to its magic stage. As in the days of magic, each word is regarded as a dangerous force that might destroy society and for which the speaker must be held responsible. Correspondingly, the pursuit of truth, under social control, is curtailed. The difference between thinking and acting is held void. Thus every thought is regarded as an act; every reflection is a thesis, and every thesis is a watchword. Everyone is called on the carpet for what he says or does not say. Everything and everybody is classified and labeled. The quality of the human that precludes identifying the individual with a class is 'metaphysical' and has no place in empiricist epistemology. The pigeonhole into which a man is shoved circumscribes his fate. As soon as a thought or a word becomes a tool, one can dispense with actually 'thinking' it, that is, with going through the logical acts involved in verbal formulation of it. As has been pointed out, often and correctly, the advantage of mathematics—the model of all neo-positivistic thinking—lies in just this 'intellectual economy.' Complicated logical operations are carried out without actual performance of all the intellectual acts upon which the mathematical and logical symbols are based. Such mechanization is indeed essential to the expansion of industry; but if it becomes the characteristic feature of minds, if reason itself is instrumentalized, it takes on a kind of materiality and blindness, becomes a fetish, a magic entity that is accepted rather than intellectually experienced.

What are the consequences of the formalization of reason? Justice, equality, happiness, tolerance, all the concepts that, as mentioned, were in preceding centuries supposed to be inherent in or sanctioned by reason, have lost their intellectual roots. They are still aims and ends, but there is no rational agency authorized to appraise and link them to an objective reality. Endorsed by venerable historical documents, they may still enjoy a certain prestige, and some are contained in the supreme law of the greatest countries. Nevertheless, they lack any confirmation by reason in its modern sense. Who can say that any one of these ideals is more closely related to truth than its opposite? According to the philosophy of the average modern intellectual, there is only one authority, namely, science, conceived as the classification of facts and the calculation of probabilities. The statement that justice and freedom are better in themselves than injustice and oppression is scientifically unverifiable and useless. It has come to sound as meaningless in itself as

would the statement that red is more beautiful than blue, or that an egg is better than milk.

The more the concept of reason becomes emasculated, the more easily it lends itself to ideological manipulation and to propagation of even the most blatant lies. The advance of enlightenment dissolves the idea of objective reason, dogmatism, and superstition; but often reaction and obscurantism profit most from this development. Vested interests opposed to the traditional humanitarian values will appeal to neutralized, impotent reason in the name of 'common sense.' This devitalization of basic concepts can be followed through political history. In the American Constitutional Convention of 1787, John Dickinson of Pennsylvania contrasted experience with reason when he said: 'Experience must be our only guide. Reason may mislead us.'* He wished to caution against a too radical idealism. Later the concepts became so emptied of substance that they could be used synonymously to advocate oppression. Charles O'Conor, a celebrated lawyer of the period before the Civil War, once nominated for the presidency by a faction of the Democratic party, argued (after outlining the blessings of compulsory servitude): 'I insist that negro slavery is not unjust; it is just, wise, and beneficent . . . I insist that negro slavery . . . is ordained by nature . . . Yielding to the clear decree of nature, and the dictates of sound philosophy, we must pronounce that institution just, benign, lawful and proper.'† Though O'Conor still uses the words nature, philosophy, and justice, they are completely formalized and cannot stand up against what he considers to be facts and experience. Subjective reason conforms to anything. It lends itself as well to the uses of the adversaries as of the defenders of the traditional humanitarian values. It furnishes, as in O'Conor's instance, the ideology for profit and reaction as well as the ideology for progress and revolution.

Another spokesman for slavery, Fitzhugh, author of *Sociology for the South,* seems to remember that once philosophy stood for concrete ideas and principles and therefore attacks it in the name of common sense. He thus expresses, though in a distorted form, the clash between the subjective and objective concepts of reason.

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*Cf. Morrison and Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic,* New York, 1942, vol. I, p. 281.

†*A Speech at the Union Meeting—at the Academy of Music, New York City,* December 19, 1859, reprinted under title, 'Negro Slavery Not Unjust,' by the *New York Herald Tribune.*

> Men of sound judgments usually give wrong reasons for their opinions because they are not abstractionists. . . . Philosophy beats them all hollow in argument, yet instinct and common sense are right and philosophy wrong. Philosophy is always wrong and instinct and common sense always right, because philosophy is unobservant and reasons from narrow and insufficient premises.*

Fearing idealistic principles, thinking as such, and intellectuals and utopians, the writer prides himself on his common sense, which sees no wrong in slavery.

The basic ideals and concepts of rationalist metaphysics were rooted in the concept of the universally human, of mankind, and their formalization implies that they have been severed from their human content. How this dehumanization of thinking affects the very foundations of our civilization, can be illustrated by analysis of the principle of the majority, which is inseparable from the principle of democracy. In the eyes of the average man, the principle of the majority is often not only a substitute for but an improvement upon objective reason: since men are after all the best judges of their own interests, the resolutions of a majority, it is thought, are certainly as valuable to a community as the intuitions of a so-called superior reason. However, the contradiction between intuition and the democratic principle, conceived in such crude terms, is only imaginary. For what does it mean to say that 'a man knows his own interests best'—how does he gain this knowledge, what evidences that his knowledge is correct? In the proposition, 'A man knows . . . best,' there is an implicit reference to an agency that is not totally arbitrary and that is incidental to some sort of reason underlying not only means but ends as well. If that agency should turn out to be again merely the majority, the whole argument would constitute a tautology.

The great philosophical tradition that contributed to the founding of modern democracy was not guilty of this tautology, for it based the principles of government upon more or less speculative assumptions—for instance, the assumption that the same spiritual substance or moral consciousness is present in each human being. In other words, respect for the majority was based on a conviction that did not itself depend on the resolutions of the majority. Locke still spoke of natural reason's agreeing

*George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South or the Failure of Free Society*, Richmond, Va., 1854, pp. 118–19.

with revelation in regard to human rights.* His theory of government refers to the affirmations of both reason and revelation. They are supposed to teach that men are 'by nature all free, equal, and independent.'†

Locke's theory of knowledge is an example of that treacherous lucidity of style which unites opposites by simply blurring the nuances. He did not care to differentiate too clearly between sensual and rational, atomistic and structural experience, nor did he indicate whether the state of nature from which he derived the natural law was inferred by logical processes or intuitively perceived. However, it seems to be sufficiently clear that freedom 'by nature' is not identical with freedom in fact. His political doctrine is based on rational insight and deductions rather than on empirical research.

The same may be said of Locke's disciple, Rousseau. When the latter declared that the renunciation of liberty is against the nature of man, because thereby 'man's actions would be deprived of all morality and his will deprived of all liberty'‡ he knew very well that the renunciation of liberty was not against the empirical nature of man; he himself bitterly criticized individuals, groups, and nations for renouncing their freedom. He referred to man's spiritual substance rather than to a psychological attitude. His doctrine of the social contract is derived from a philosophical doctrine of man, according to which the principle of the majority rather than that of power corresponds to human nature as it is described in speculative thinking. In the history of social philosophy even the term 'common sense' is inseparably linked to the idea of self-evident truth. It was Thomas Reid who, twelve years before the time of Paine's famous pamphlet and the Declaration of Independence, identified the principles of common sense with self-evident truths and thus reconciled empiricism with rationalistic metaphysics.

Deprived of its rational foundation, the democratic principle becomes exclusively dependent upon the so-called interests of the people, and these are functions of blind or all too conscious economic forces. They do not offer any guarantee against tyranny.§ In the period of the free market

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* *Locke on Civil Government*, Second Treatise, chap. v, Everyman's Library, p. 129.

† Ibid. chap. VIII, p. 164.

‡ *Contrat social*, vol. I, p. 4.

§ The anxiety of the editor of Tocqueville, in speaking of the negative aspects of the majority principle, was superfluous (cf. *Democracy in America*, New York, 1898, vol. I, pp. 334–5, note). The editor asserts that 'it is only a figure of speech to say that the majority of the people makes the laws,' and among other things reminds us

system, for instance, institutions based on the idea of human rights were accepted by many people as a good instrument for controlling the government and maintaining peace. But if the situation changes, if powerful economic groups find it useful to set up a dictatorship and abolish majority rule, no objection founded on reason can be opposed to their action. If they have a real chance of success, they would simply be foolish not to take it. The only consideration that could prevent them from doing so would be the possibility that their own interests would be endangered, and not concern over violation of a truth, of reason. Once the philosophical foundation of democracy has collapsed, the statement that dictatorship is bad is rationally valid only for those who are not its beneficiaries, and there is no theoretical obstacle to the transformation of this statement into its opposite.

The men who made the Constitution of the United States considered 'the fundamental law of every society, the *lex majoris partis*,'* but they were far from substituting the verdicts of the majority for those of reason. When they incorporated an ingenious system of checks and balances in the structure of government, they held, as Noah Webster put it, that 'the powers lodged in Congress are extensive, but it is presumed that they are not too extensive.'† He called the principle of the majority 'a doctrine as universally received as any intuitive truth'‡ and saw in it one among other natural ideas of similar dignity. For these men there was no principle that did not derive its authority from a metaphysical or religious source. Dickinson regarded the government and its trust as 'founded on the nature of man, that is, on the will of his Maker and . . . therefore sacred. It is then an offence against Heaven to violate that trust.'§

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that this is done in fact by their delegates. He could have added that if Tocqueville spoke of the tyranny of the majority, Jefferson, in a letter quoted by Tocqueville, spoke of 'the tyranny of the legislatures,' *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Definitive Edition, Washington, D. C., 1905, vol. VII, p. 312. Jefferson was so suspicious of either department of government in a democracy, 'whether legislative or executive,' that he was opposed to maintenance of a standing army. Cf. ibid. p. 323.

* Ibid. p. 324.

† 'An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution . . .,' in *Pamphlets on the Constitution of the United States*, ed. by Paul L. Ford, Brooklyn, N. Y., 1888, p. 45.

‡ Ibid. p. 30.

§ Ibid. 'Letters of Fabius,' p. 181.

The majority principle in itself was certainly not considered to be a guarantee of justice. 'The majority,' says John Adams,* 'has eternally and without one exception, usurped over the rights of the minority.' These rights and all other fundamental principles were believed to be intuitive truths. They were taken over directly or indirectly from a philosophical tradition that at the time was still alive. They can be traced back through the history of Western thought to their religious and mythological roots, and it is from these origins that they had preserved the 'awfulness' that Dickinson mentions.

Subjective reason has no use for such inheritance. It reveals truth as habit and thereby strips it of its spiritual authority. Today the idea of the majority, deprived of its rational foundations, has assumed a completely irrational aspect. Every philosophical, ethical, and political idea—its lifeline connecting it with its historical origins having been severed—has a tendency to become the nucleus of a new mythology, and this is one of the reasons why the advance of enlightenment tends at certain points to revert to superstition and paranoia. The majority principle, in the form of popular verdicts on each and every matter, implemented by all kinds of polls and modern techniques of communication, has become the sovereign force to which thought must cater. It is a new god, not in the sense in which the heralds of the great revolutions conceived it, namely, as a power of resistance to existing injustice, but as a power of resistance to anything that does not conform. The more the judgment of the people is manipulated by all kinds of interests, the more is the majority presented as the arbiter in cultural life. It is supposed to justify the surrogates of culture in all its branches, down to the mass-deceiving products of popular art and literature. The greater the extent to which scientific propaganda makes of public opinion a mere tool for obscure forces, the more does public opinion appear a substitute for reason. This illusory triumph of democratic progress consumes the intellectual substance on which democracy has lived.

Not only the guiding concepts of morals and politics, such as liberty, equality, or justice, but all specific aims and ends in all walks of life are affected by this dissociation of human aspirations and potentialities from the idea of objective truth. According to current standards, good artists do not serve truth better than good prison wardens or bankers or housemaids. If we tried to argue that the calling of an artist is nobler, we

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*Charles Beard, *Economic Origin of Jeffersonian Democracy*, New York, 1915, p. 305.

would be told that the contention is meaningless—that while the efficiency of two housemaids can be compared on the basis of their relative cleanliness, honesty, skill, et cetera, there is no way of comparing a housemaid and an artist. However, thorough analysis would show that in modern society there is one implicit yardstick for art as well as for unskilled labor, namely time, for goodness in the sense of a specific efficiency is a function of time.

It may be just as meaningless to call one particular way of living, one religion, one philosophy better or higher or truer than another. Since ends are no longer determined in the light of reason, it is also impossible to say that one economic or political system, no matter how cruel and despotic, is less reasonable than another. According to formalized reason, despotism, cruelty, oppression are not bad in themselves; no rational agency would endorse a verdict against dictatorship if its sponsors were likely to profit by it. Phrases like 'the dignity of man' either imply a dialectical advance in which the idea of divine right is preserved and transcended, or become hackneyed slogans that reveal their emptiness as soon as somebody inquires into their specific meaning. Their life depends, so to speak, on unconscious memories. If a group of enlightened people were about to fight even the greatest evil imaginable, subjective reason would make it almost impossible to point simply to the nature of the evil and to the nature of humanity, which make the fight imperative. Many would at once ask what the real motives are. It would have to be asserted that the reasons are realistic, that is to say, correspond to personal interests, even though, for the mass of the people, these latter may be more difficult to grasp than the silent appeal of the situation itself.

The fact that the average man still seems to be attached to the old ideals might be held to contradict this analysis. Formulated in general terms, the objection might be that there is a force that outweighs the destructive effects of formalized reason; namely, conformity to generally accepted values and behavior. After all, there is a large number of ideas that we have been taught to cherish and respect from our earliest childhood. Since these ideas and all the theoretical views connected with them are justified not by reason alone but also by almost universal consent, it would seem that they cannot be affected by the transformation of reason into a mere instrument. They draw their strength from our reverence for the community in which we live, from men who have given their lives for them, from the respect we owe to the founders of the few enlightened nations of our time. This objection actually expresses the weakness of the

justification of allegedly objective content by past and present reputation. If tradition, so often denounced in modern scientific and political history, is now invoked as the measure of any ethical or religious truth, this truth has already been affected and must suffer from a lack of authenticity no less acutely than the principle that is supposed to justify it. In the centuries in which tradition still could play the role of evidence, the belief in it was itself derived from the belief in an objective truth. By now, the reference to tradition seems to have preserved but one function from those older times: it indicates that the consensus behind the principle that it seeks to reaffirm is economically or politically powerful. He who offends it is forewarned.

In the eighteenth century the conviction that man is endowed with certain rights was not a repetition of beliefs that were held by the community, nor even a repetition of beliefs handed down by forefathers. It was a reflection of the situation of the men who proclaimed these rights; it expressed a critique of conditions that imperatively called for change, and this demand was understood by and translated into philosophical thought and historical actions. The pathfinders of modern thought did not derive what is good from the law—they even broke the law—but they tried to reconcile the law with the good. Their role in history was not that of adapting their words and actions to the text of old documents or generally accepted doctrines: they themselves created the documents and brought about the acceptance of their doctrines. Today, those who cherish these doctrines and are deprived of an adequate philosophy may regard them either as expressions of mere subjective desires or as an established pattern deriving authority from the number of people who believe in it and the length of time of its existence. The very fact that tradition has to be invoked today shows that it has lost its hold on the people. No wonder that whole nations—and Germany is not alone in this—seem to have awakened one morning only to discover that their most cherished ideals were merely bubbles.

It is true that although the progress of subjective reason destroyed the theoretical basis of mythological, religious, and rationalistic ideas, civilized society has up until now been living on the residue of these ideas. But they tend to become more than ever a mere residue and are thus gradually losing their power of conviction. When the great religious and philosophical conceptions were alive, thinking people did not extol humility and brotherly love, justice and humanity because it was realistic to maintain such principles and odd and dangerous to deviate from them,

or because these maxims were more in harmony with their supposedly free tastes than others. They held to such ideas because they saw in them elements of truth, because they connected them with the idea of *logos*, whether in the form of God or of a transcendental mind, or even of nature as an eternal principle. Not only were the highest aims thought of as having an objective meaning, an inherent significance, but even the humblest pursuits and fancies depended on a belief in the general desirability, the inherent value of their objects.

Mythological, objective origins, as they are being destroyed by subjective reason, do not merely pertain to great universal concepts, but are also at the bottom of apparently personal, entirely psychological behaviors and actions. They are all—down to the very emotions—evaporating, as they are being emptied of this objective content, this relation to supposedly objective truth. As children's games and adults' fancies originate in mythology, each joy was once related to a belief in an ultimate truth.

Thorstein Veblen unveiled the distorted medieval motives in nineteenth-century architecture.* He found the longing for pomp and ornament to be a residue of feudal attitudes. However, the analysis of so-called honorific waste leads to the discovery not only of certain aspects of barbaric oppression surviving in modern social life and individual psychology, but also of the continued operation of long-forgotten lines of worship, fear, and superstition. They express themselves in the most 'natural' preferences and antipathies and are taken for granted in civilization. Because of the apparent lack of rational motive they become rationalized according to subjective reason. The fact that in any modern culture 'high' ranks before 'low,' that the clean is attractive and dirt repugnant, that certain smells are experienced as good, others as disgusting, that certain kinds of food are cherished, others abhorred, is due to old taboos, myths, and devotions and to their fate in history, rather than to the hygienic or other pragmatistic reasons that enlightened individuals or liberal religions may try to put forward.

These old forms of life smoldering under the surface of modern civilization still provide, in many cases, the warmth inherent in any delight, in any love of a thing for its own sake rather than for that of another thing. The pleasure of keeping a garden goes back to ancient times when gardens belonged to the gods and were cultivated for them. The sense of beauty in

* Cf. T. W. Adorno, 'Veblen's Attack on Culture,' in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, New York, 1941, vol. IX, pp. 392–3.

both nature and art is connected, by a thousand delicate threads, to these old superstitions.* If, by either flouting or flaunting the threads, modern man cuts them, the pleasure may continue for a while but its inner life is extinguished.

We cannot credit our enjoyment of a flower or of the atmosphere of a room to an autonomous esthetic instinct. Man's esthetic responsiveness relates in its prehistory to various forms of idolatry; his belief in the goodness or sacredness of a thing precedes his enjoyment of its beauty. This applies no less to such concepts as freedom and humanity. What has been said about the dignity of man is certainly applicable to the concepts of justice and equality. Such ideas must preserve the negative element, as the negation of the ancient stage of injustice or inequality, and at the same time conserve the original absolute significance rooted in their dreadful origins. Otherwise they become not only indifferent but untrue.

All these cherished ideas, all the forces that, in addition to physical force and material interest, hold society together, still exist, but have been undermined by the formalization of reason. This process, as we have seen, is connected with the conviction that our aims, whatever they are, depend upon likes and dislikes that in themselves are meaningless. Let us assume that this conviction really penetrates the details of daily life—and it has already penetrated deeper than most of us realize. Less and less is anything done for its own sake. A hike that takes a man out of the city to the banks of a river or a mountain top would be irrational and idiotic, judged by utilitarian standards; he is devoting himself to a silly or destructive pastime. In the view of formalized reason, an activity is reasonable only if it serves another purpose, e.g. health or relaxation, which helps to replenish his working power. In other words, the activity is merely a tool, for it derives its meaning only through its connection with other ends.

We cannot maintain that the pleasure a man gets from a landscape, let us say, would last long if he were convinced *a priori* that the forms and colors he sees are just forms and colors, that all structures in which they

*Even the penchant for tidiness, a modern taste par excellence, seems to be rooted in the belief in magic. Sir James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, vol. I, part I, p. 175) quotes a report on the natives of New Britain which concludes that 'the cleanliness which is usual in the houses, and consists in sweeping the floor carefully every day, is by no means based on a desire for cleanliness and neatness in themselves, but purely on the effort to put out of the way anything that might serve the ill-wisher as a charm.'

play a role are purely subjective and have no relation whatsoever to any meaningful order or totality, that they simply and necessarily express nothing. If such pleasures have become habitual he may go on enjoying them for the rest of his life, or he may never fully realize the meaninglessness of the things he adores. Our tastes are formed in early childhood; what we learn later influences us less. The children may imitate the father who was addicted to long walks, but if the formalization of reason has progressed far enough, they will consider that they have done their duty by their bodies if they go through a set of gymnastics to the commands of a radio voice. No walk through the landscape is necessary any longer; and thus the very concept of landscape as experienced by a pedestrian becomes meaningless and arbitrary. Landscape deteriorates altogether into landscaping.

The French symbolists had a special term to express their love for things that had lost their objective significance, namely, 'spleen.' The conscious, challenging arbitrariness in the choice of objects, its 'absurdity,' 'perverseness,' as if by a silent gesture discloses the irrationality of utilitarian logic, which it then slaps in the face in order to demonstrate its inadequacy with regard to human experience. And while making it conscious, by this shock, of the fact that it forgets the subject, the gesture simultaneously expresses the subject's sorrow over his inability to achieve an objective order.

Twentieth-century society is not troubled by such inconsistencies. For it, meaning can be achieved in only one way—service for a purpose. Likes and dislikes that under mass culture have become meaningless are either relegated under the head of amusements, leisure-time activities, social contacts, et cetera, or left to die out gradually. Spleen, the protest of nonconformism, of the individual, has itself become regimented: the obsession of the dandy turns into the hobby of Babbitt. The idea of the hobby, of a 'good time,' or 'fun,' expresses no regret whatsoever for the vanishing of objective reason and the stripping from reality of any inherent 'sense.' The person who indulges in a hobby does not even make believe that it has any relation to ultimate truth. When asked in a questionnaire to state your hobby, you put down golf, books, photography, or what not, as unthinkingly as you enter the figure of your weight. As recognized, rationalized predilections, considered necessary to keep people in good humor, hobbies have become an institution. Even stereotyped good humor, which is nothing better than a psychological precondition of efficiency, may fade away together with all other emotions as soon as we lose

the last trace of recollection that it once was related to the idea of divinity. Those who 'keep smiling' begin to look sad and perhaps even desperate.

What has been said in regard to the smaller delights holds true also for the higher aspirations in relation to achieving the good and beautiful. Quick grasp of facts replaces intellectual penetration of the phenomena of experience. The child who knows Santa Claus as an employee of a department store and grasps the relation between sales figures and Christmas, may take it as a matter of course that there is an interaction between religion and business as a whole. Emerson in his time observed it with considerable bitterness: 'Religious institutions ... have already acquired a market value as conservators of property; if priests and church members should not be able to maintain them the chambers of commerce and the presidents of the banks, the very innholders and landlords of the country, would muster with fury to their support.'* Today such interconnections as well as the heterogeneity of truth and religion are taken for granted. The child learns early to be a good sport; he may continue to play his role as a naive child, at the same time naturally exhibiting his shrewder insight as soon as he is alone with other boys. This kind of pluralism, which results from modern education with respect to all ideal principles, democratic or religious, namely, from the fact that they are referred strictly to specific occasions, universal as their meaning may be, makes for a schizophrenic trait in modern life.

A work of art once aspired to tell the world what it is, to formulate an ultimate verdict. Today it is completely neutralized. Take, for example, Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony. The average concertgoer today is unable to experience its objective meaning. He listens to it as though it had been written to illustrate the program annotator's comments. It is all set down in black and white—the tension between the moral postulate and social reality, the fact that, in contrast to the situation in France, spiritual life in Germany could not express itself politically but had to seek an outlet in art and music. The composition has been reified, made a museum piece, and its performance a leisure-time occupation, an event, an opportunity for star performances, or a social gathering that must be attended if one belongs to a certain group. But no living relation to the work in question, no direct, spontaneous understanding of its function as an expression, no

* *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Centenary Edition, Boston and New York, 1903, vol. I, p. 321.

experience of its totality as an image of what once was called truth, is left. This reification is typical of the subjectivization and formalization of reason. It transforms works of art into cultural commodities, and their consumption into a series of haphazard emotions divorced from our real intentions and aspirations. Art has been severed from truth as well as politics or religion.

Reification is a process that can be traced back to the beginnings of organized society and the use of tools. However, the transformation of all products of human activity into commodities was achieved only with the emergence of industrialist society. The functions once performed by objective reason, by authoritarian religion, or by metaphysics have been taken over by the reifying mechanisms of the anonymous economic apparatus. It is the price paid on the market that determines the salability of merchandise and thus the productiveness of a specific kind of labor. Activities are branded as senseless or superfluous, as luxuries, unless they are useful or, as in wartime, contribute to the maintenance and safeguarding of the general conditions under which industry can flourish. Productive work, manual or intellectual, has become respectable, indeed the only accepted way of spending one's life, and any occupation, the pursuit of any end that eventually yields an income, is called productive.

The great theoreticians of middle-class society, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and others, called the feudal lords and medieval clergymen parasites because their ways of living depended on but did not contribute directly to production. The clergy and the aristocrats were supposed to devote their lives respectively to God and to chivalry or amours. By their mere existence and activities, they created symbols admired and cherished by the masses. Machiavelli and his disciples recognized that times had changed and showed how illusory were the values of the things to which the old rulers had devoted their time. Machiavelli has been followed through down to the doctrine of Veblen. Today luxury is not ruled out, at least not by the producers of luxury goods. However, it finds its justification not in its own existence, but in the opportunities it creates for commerce and industry. Luxuries are either adopted as necessities by the masses or regarded as a means of relaxation. Nothing, not even material well-being, which has allegedly replaced the salvation of the soul as man's highest goal, is valuable in and for itself, no aim as such is better than another.

Modern thought has tried to make a philosophy out of this view, as

represented in pragmatism.* The core of this philosophy is the opinion that an idea, a concept, or a theory is nothing but a scheme or plan of action, and therefore truth is nothing but the successfulness of the idea. In an analysis of William James's *Pragmatism*, John Dewey comments upon the concepts of truth and meaning. Quoting James, he says: 'True ideas lead us into useful verbal and conceptual quarters, as well as directly up to useful sensible termini. They lead to consistency, stability, and flowing intercourse.' An idea, Dewey explains, is 'a draft drawn upon existing things and intention to act so as to arrange them in a certain way. From which it follows that if the draft is honored, if existences, following upon the actions, rearrange or re-adjust themselves in the way the idea intends, the idea is true.'† If it were not for the founder of the school, Charles S. Peirce, who has told us that he 'learned philosophy out of Kant,'‡ one might be tempted to deny any philosophical pedigree to a doctrine that holds not that our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful because our ideas are true, but rather that our ideas are true because our expectations are fulfilled and our actions successful. Indeed, it would be doing Kant an injustice to make him responsible for this development. He made scientific insight dependent upon transcendental, not upon empirical functions. He did not liquidate truth by identifying it with the practical actions of verification, nor by teaching that meaning and effect are identical. He tried ultimately to establish the absolute validity of certain ideas *per se*, for their own sake. The pragmatistic narrowing of the field of vision reduces the meaning of any idea to that of a plan or draft.

Pragmatism has from its beginnings implicitly justified the current substitution of the logic of probability for that of truth, which has since become widely prevalent. For if a concept or an idea is significant only by virtue of its consequences, any statement expresses an expectation with a higher or lower degree of probability. In statements concerning the past,

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* Pragmatism has been critically examined by many schools of thought, e.g. from the standpoint of voluntarism by Hugo Münsterberg in his *Philosophie der Werte*, Leipzig, 1921; from the standpoint of objective phenomenology in the elaborate study of Max Scheler, 'Erkenntis und Arbeit' in his *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, Leipzig, 1926 (cf. particularly pp. 259–324); from the standpoint of a dialectical philosophy by Max Horkheimer in 'Der Neueste Angriff auf die Metaphysik,' *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1937, vol. VI, pp. 4–53, and in 'Traditionelle und Kritische Theorie,' ibid. pp. 245–94. The remarks in the text are intended only to describe the role of pragmatism in the process of the subjectivization of reason.

† *Essays in Experimental Logic*, Chicago, 1916, pp. 310 and 317.

‡ *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Cambridge, Mass., 1934, vol. V, p. 274.

the expected events are the process of corroboration, the production of evidence from human witnesses or any kind of documents. The difference between the corroboration of a judgment by the facts that it predicts, and by the steps of inquiry that it may necessitate, is submerged in the concept of verification. The dimension of the past, absorbed by that of the future, is expelled from logic. 'Knowledge,' says Dewey,* 'is always a matter of the use that is made of experienced natural events, a use in which given things are treated as indications of what will be experienced under different conditions.'†

To this kind of philosophy prediction is the essence not only of calculation but of all thinking as such. It does not differentiate sufficiently between judgements that actually express a prognosis—e.g. 'Tomorrow it will rain'—and those that can be verified only after they have been formulated, which is naturally true of any judgment. Present meaning and future verification of a proposition are not the same thing. The judgment that a man is sick, or that humanity is in agony, is no prognosis, even if it can be verified in a process subsequent to its formulation. It is not pragmatic, even though it may bring about recovery.

Pragmatism reflects a society that has no time to remember and meditate.

> The world is weary of the past,
> Oh, might it die or rest at last.

Like science, philosophy itself 'becomes not a contemplative survey of existence nor an analysis of what is past and done with, but an outlook upon future possibilities with a reference to attaining the better and averting the worst.‡ Probability or, better, calculability replaces truth, and the historical process that in society tends to make of truth an empty phrase receives a blessing, as it were, from pragmatism, which makes an empty phrase of it in philosophy.

Dewey explains what, according to James, is

> the significance of an object: the meaning which should be contained in its conception or definition. 'To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind

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* 'A Recovery of Philosophy,' in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, New York, 1917, p. 47.

† I should at least say under the same or under similar conditions.

‡ Ibid. p. 53.

the object may involve, what sensations we are to expect from it and what reactions we must prepare,' or more shortly, as it is quoted from [Wilhelm] Ostwald, 'all realities influence our practice, and that influence is their meaning for us.'

Dewey does not see how anyone can doubt the import of this theory, 'or . . . accuse it of subjectivism or idealism, since the object with its power to produce effects is assumed.'* However, the subjectivism of the school lies in the role that 'our' practices, actions, and interests play in its theory of knowledge, not in its acceptance of a phenomenalistic doctrine.† If true judgments on objects, and therewith the concept of the object itself, rests solely on 'effects' upon the subject's action, it is hard to understand what meaning could still be attributed to the concept 'object.' According to pragmatism, truth is to be desired not for its own sake but in so far as it works best, as it leads us to something that is alien or at least different from truth itself.

When James complained that the critics of pragmatism 'simply assume that no pragmatist *can* admit a genuinely theoretic interest,'‡ he was certainly right with regard to the psychological existence of such an interest, but if one follows his own advice—'to take the spirit rather than the letter'§—it appears that pragmatism, like technocracy, has certainly contributed a great deal toward the fashionable disrepute of that 'stationary contemplation'¶ which was once the highest aspiration of man. Any idea of truth, even a dialectical whole of thought, as it occurs in a living mind, might be called 'stationary contemplation,' in so far as it is pursued for its own sake instead of as a means to 'consistency, stability, and flowing intercourse.' Both the attack on contemplation and the praise of the craftsman express the triumph of the means over the end.

Long after Plato's time the concept of the Ideas still represented the sphere of aloofness, independence, and in a certain sense even freedom, an objectivity that did not submit to 'our' interests. Philosophy, by

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*Ibid. pp. 308–9.

†Positivism and pragmatism identify philosophy with scientism. For this reason pragmatism is viewed, in the present context, as a genuine expression of the positivistic approach. The two philosophies differ only in that the earlier positivism professed phenomenalism, i.e. sensualistic idealism.

‡*The Meaning of Truth*, New York, 1910, p. 208.

§Ibid. p. 180.

¶James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, New York, 1924, p. 59.

preserving the idea of objective truth under the name of the absolute, or in any other spiritualized form, achieved the relativization of subjectivity. It insisted on the difference in principle between *mundus sensibilis* and *mundus intelligibilis*, between the image of reality as structured by man's intellectual and physical tools of domination, by his interests and actions or any kind of technical procedure, and a concept of an order or hierarchy, of static or dynamic structure, that would do full justice to things and nature. In pragmatism, pluralistic as it may represent itself to be, everything becomes mere subject matter and thus ultimately the same, an element in the chain of means and effects. 'Test every concept by the question "What sensible difference to anybody will its truth make?" and you are in the best possible position for understanding what it means and for discussing its importance.'* Quite apart from the problems involved in the term 'anybody,' it follows from this rule that the behavior of people decides the meaning of a concept. The significance of God, cause, number, substance, or soul consists, as James asserts, in nothing but the tendency of the given concept to make us act or think. If the world should reach a point at which it ceases to care not only about such metaphysical entities but also about murders perpetrated behind closed frontiers or simply in the dark, one would have to conclude that the concepts of such murders have no meaning, that they represent no 'distinct ideas' or truths, since they do not make any 'sensible difference to anybody.' How should anyone react sensibly to such concepts if he takes it for granted that his reaction is their only meaning?

What the pragmatist means by reaction is actually transferred to philosophy from the field of the natural sciences. His pride is 'to think of everything just as everything is thought of in the laboratory, that is, as a question of experimentation.'† Peirce, who coined the name of the school, declares that the procedure of the pragmatist

> is no other than that experimental method by which all the successful sciences (in which number nobody in his sense would include metaphysics) have reached the degrees of certainty that are severally proper to them today; this experimental method being itself nothing but a particular application of an older logical rule—'By their fruits ye shall know them.'‡

* Ibid. p. 82.
† Peirce, op. cit. p. 272.
‡ Ibid. p. 317.

The explanation becomes more involved when he declares that 'a conception, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life' and that 'nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept imply.' The procedure he recommends will afford 'a complete definition of the concept, and *there is absolutely nothing more in it.*'* He attempts to clear up the paradox in the supposedly obvious assurance that only possible results from experiments can have direct bearing upon human conduct, in the conditional sentence that makes this view dependent on the accurate definition of 'all the conceivable experimental phenomena' in any particular case. But since the question of what the conceivable phenomena may be must again be answered by experiment, these sweeping statements on methodology seem to lead us into serious logical difficulties. How is it possible to subject experimentation to the criterion of 'being conceivable,' if any concept—that is to say, whatever might be conceivable—depends essentially on experimentation?

While philosophy in its objectivistic stage sought to be the agency that brought human conduct, including scientific undertakings, to a final understanding of its own reason and justice, pragmatism tries to retranslate any understanding into mere conduct. Its ambition is to be itself nothing else but practical activity, as distinct from theoretical insight, which, according to pragmatistic teachings, is either only a name for physical events or just meaningless. But a doctrine that seriously attempts to dissolve the intellectual categories—such as truth, meaning, or conceptions—into practical attitudes cannot itself expect to be conceived in the intellectual sense of the word; it can only try to function as a mechanism for starting certain series of events. According to Dewey, whose philosophy is the most radical and consistent form of pragmatism, his own theory 'means that knowing is literally something which we do; that analysis is ultimately physical and active; that meanings in their logical quality are standpoints, attitudes, and methods of behavior toward facts, and that active experimentation is essential to verification.'† This, at least, is consistent, but it abolishes philosophical thought while it still *is*

* Ibid. p. 273.

† *Essays in Experimental Logic*, p. 330.

philosophical thought. The ideal pragmatistic philosopher would be he who, as the Latin adage has it, remains silent.

In accordance with the pragmatist's worship of natural sciences, there is only one kind of experience that counts, namely, the experiment. The process that tends to replace the various theoretical ways to objective truth with the powerful machinery of organized research is sanctioned by philosophy, or rather is being identified with philosophy. All things in nature become identical with the phenomena they present when submitted to the practices of our laboratories, whose problems no less than their apparatus express in turn the problems and interests of society as it is. This view may be compared with that of a criminologist maintaining that trustworthy knowledge of a human being can be obtained only by the well-tested and streamlined examining methods applied to a suspect in the hands of metropolitan police. Francis Bacon, the great precursor of experimentalism, has described the method with youthful frankness: 'Quemadmodum enim ingenium alicujus haud bene noris aut probaris, nisi eum irritaveris; neque Proteus se in varias rerum facies vertere solitus est, nisi manicis arcte comprehensus; similiter etiam Natura arte irritata et vexata se clarius prodit, quam cum sibi libera permittitur.'*

'Active experimentation' actually produces concrete answers to concrete questions, as posed by the interests of individuals, groups, or the community. It is not always the physicist who adheres to this subjectivistic identification by which answers determined by the social division of labor become truth as such. The physicist's avowed role in modern society is to deal with everything as subject matter. He does not have to decide about the meaning of this role. Neither is he obliged to interpret so-called intellectual concepts as purely physical events, nor to hypostatize his own method as the only meaningful intellectual behavior. He may even harbor the hope that his own findings will form part of a truth that is not decided upon in a laboratory. He may furthermore doubt that experimentation is the essential part of his endeavor. It is rather the professor of philosophy, trying to imitate the physicist in order to enroll his branch of activity

* 'De augmentis scientiarum,' lib. II, cap. II, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. by Basil Montague, London, 1827, vol. VIII, p. 96. 'For like as a man's disposition is never well known till he be crossed, nor Proteus ever changed shapes till he was straightened and held fast, so the passages and variations of nature cannot appear so fully in the liberty of nature as in the trials and vexations of art.' *Works of Francis Bacon*, new edition, vol. I, London, 1826, p. 78.

among 'all the successful sciences,' who deals with thoughts as though they were things and eliminates any other idea of truth than the one abstracted from streamlined domination of nature.

Pragmatism, in trying to turn experimental physics into a prototype of all science and to model all spheres of intellectual life after the techniques of the laboratory, is the counterpart of modern industrialism, for which the factory is the prototype of human existence, and which models all branches of culture after production on the conveyor belt, or after the rationalized front office. In order to prove its right to be conceived, each thought must have an alibi, must present a record of its expediency. Even if its direct use is 'theoretical,' it is ultimately put to test by the practical application of the theory in which it functions. Thought must be gauged by something that is not thought, by its effect on production or its impact on social conduct, as art today is being ultimately gauged in every detail by something that is not art, be it box-office or propaganda value. However, there is a noticeable difference between the attitude of the scientist and the artist on the one hand, and that of the philosopher on the other. The former still sometimes repudiate the embarrassing 'fruits' of their efforts that become their criteria in industrialist society, and break from the control of conformity. The latter has made it his business to justify the factual criteria as supreme. As a person, as a political or social reformer, as a man of taste, he may oppose the practical consequences of scientific, artistic, or religious undertakings in the world as it is; his philosophy, however, destroys any other principle to which he could appeal.

This comes to the fore in many ethical or religious discussions in pragmatist writings. They are liberal, tolerant, optimistic, and quite unable to deal with the cultural débâcle of our days. Referring to a modern sect of his time that he calls the 'mind-cure movement,' James says:

> The obvious outcome of our total experience is that the world can be handled according to many systems of ideas, and is so handled by different men, and will each time give some characteristic kind of profit, for which he cares, to the handler, while at the same time some other kind of profit has to be omitted or postponed. Science gives to all of us telegraphy, electric lighting, and diagnosis, and succeeds in preventing and curing a certain amount of disease. Religion in the shape of mind-cure gives to some of us serenity, moral poise, and happiness, and prevents certain forms of disease as well as science does, or even better in a certain class of persons. Evidently, then, the science and the

> religion are both of them genuine keys for unlocking the world's treasure-house to him who can use either of them practically.*

In face of the idea that truth might afford the opposite of satisfaction and turn out to be completely shocking to humanity at a given historical moment and thus be repudiated by anybody, the fathers of pragmatism made the satisfaction of the subject the criterion of truth. For such a doctrine there is no possibility of rejecting or even criticizing any species of belief that is enjoyed by its adherents. Pragmatism may justly be used as a vindication even by such sects as try to use both science and religion as 'genuine keys for unlocking the world's treasure-house' in a more literal sense of the word than James may have imagined.

Both Peirce and James wrote at a period when prosperity and harmony between social groups as well as nations seemed at hand, and no major catastrophes were expected. Their philosophy reflects with an almost disarming candor the spirit of the prevailing business culture, the very same attitude of 'being practical' as a counter to which philosophical meditation as such was conceived. From the heights of the contemporary successes of science they could laugh at Plato, who, after presenting his theory of colors, goes on to say: 'He, however, who should attempt to verify all this by experiment, would forget the difference of the human and divine nature. For God only has the knowledge and also the power which are able to combine many things into one and again resolve the one into many. But no man either is or ever will be able to accomplish either the one or the other operation.'†

No more drastic refutation of a prognosis by history can be imagined than the one suffered by Plato. Yet the triumph of the experiment is only one aspect of the process. Pragmatism, which assigns to anything and anybody the role of an instrument—not in the name of God or objective truth, but in the name of whatever is practically achieved by it—asks scornfully what such expressions as 'truth itself,' or the good that Plato and his objectivistic successors left undefined, can really mean. It might be answered that they at least preserved the awareness of differences that pragmatism has been invented to deny—the difference between thinking

* *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* New York, 1902, p. 120.

† 'Timaeus,' 68, in *The Dialogues of Plato,* trans. by B. Jowett, New York, 1937, vol. II, p. 47.

in the laboratory and in philosophy, and consequently the difference between the destination of mankind and its present course.

Dewey identifies fulfilment of the desires of people as they are with the highest aspirations of mankind:

> Faith in the power of intelligence to imagine a future which is the projection of the desirable in the present, and to invent the instrumentalities of its realization, is our salvation. And it is a faith which must be nurtured and made articulate; surely a sufficiently large task for our philosophy.*

'Projection of the desirable in the present' is no solution. Two interpretations of the concept are possible. First, it may be taken to refer to the desires of people as they really are, conditioned by the whole social system under which they live—a system that makes it more than doubtful whether their desires are actually theirs. If these desires are accepted in an uncritical way, not transcending their immediate, subjective range, market research and Gallup polls would be a more adequate means for ascertaining them than philosophy. Or, second, Dewey somehow agrees to accepting some kind of difference between subjective desire and objective desirability. Such an admission would mark just the beginning of critical philosophical analysis—unless pragmatism is willing, as soon as it faces this crisis, to surrender and to fall back upon objective reason and mythology.

The reduction of reason to a mere instrument finally affects even its character as an instrument. The anti-philosophical spirit that is inseparable from the subjective concept of reason, and that in Europe culminated in the totalitarian persecutions of intellectuals, whether or not they were its pioneers, is symptomatic of the abasement of reason. The traditionalist, conservative critics of civilization commit a fundamental error when they attack modern intellectualization without at the same time attacking the stultification that is only another aspect of the same process. The human intellect, which has biological and social origins, is not an absolute entity, isolated and independent. It has been declared to be so only as a result of the social division of labor, in order to justify the latter on the basis of man's natural constitution. The leading functions of production—commanding, planning, organizing—were contrasted as pure intellect to the manual functions of production as lower, impurer form of work, the labor

*'A Recovery of Philosophy,' in op. cit. pp. 68–9.

of slaves. It is not by accident that the so-called Platonic psychology, in which the intellect was for the first time contrasted with other human 'faculties,' particularly with the instinctual life, was conceived on the pattern of the division of powers in a rigidly hierarchic state.

Dewey* is fully conscious of this suspicious origin of the concept of pure intellect, but he accepts the consequence of reinterpreting intellectual as practical work, thus extolling physical labor and rehabilitating instincts. He disregards any speculative capacity of reason as distinct from existing science. In reality, the emancipation of the intellect from the instinctual life did not change the fact that its richness and strength still depend on its concrete content, and it must atrophy and shrink when its connections with this are cut. An intelligent man is not one who can merely reason correctly, but one whose mind is open to perceiving objective contents, who is able to receive the impact of their essential structures and to render it in human language; this holds also for the nature of thinking as such, and for its truth content. The neutralization of reason that deprives it of any relation to objective content and of its power of judging the latter, and that degrades it to an executive agency concerned with the how rather than with the what, transforms it to an ever-increasing extent into a mere dull apparatus for registering facts. Subjective reason loses all spontaneity, productivity, power to discover and assert new kinds of content—it loses its very subjectivity. Like a too frequently sharpened razor blade, this 'instrument' becomes too thin and in the end is even inadequate for mastering the purely formalistic tasks to which it is limited. This parallels the general social tendency to destruction of productive forces, precisely in a period of tremendous growth of these forces.

Aldous Huxley's negative utopia expresses this aspect of the formalization of reason, that is to say, its transformation into stupidity. In it, the techniques of the brave new world, and the intellectual processes connected with them, are represented as tremendously refined. But the aims they serve—the stupid 'feelies' that allow one to feel a fur projected on a screen, the 'hypnopaedia' that inculcates the all-powerful slogans of the system in sleeping children, the artificial methods of reproduction that standardize and classify human beings even before they are born—all these reflect a process taking place in thinking itself that leads to a system of prohibition of thinking and that must end finally in subjective stupidity, prefigured in the objective idiocy of all life content. Thinking in itself tends

* *Human Nature or Conduct*, New York, 1938, pp. 58–9.

to be replaced by stereotyped ideas. These are on the one hand treated as mere convenient instruments to be opportunistically abandoned or accepted, and on the other as objects of fanatic adoration.

Huxley attacks a monopolistic state-capitalist world organization that is under the aegis of a self-dissolving subjective reason conceived as an absolute. But at the same time this novel seems to oppose to the ideal of this stultifying system a heroic metaphysical individualism that indiscriminately condemns fascism and enlightenment, psychoanalysis and moving pictures, de-mythologization and crude mythologies, and extols above all the cultured man, untainted by total civilization and sure of his instincts, or perhaps the skeptic. Thus Huxley unwittingly allies himself with the reactionary cultural conservatism that everywhere—and especially in Germany—has paved the way to the same monopolistic collectivism that he criticizes in the name of the soul as opposed to the intellect. In other words, while the naive assertion of subjective reason has actually produced symptoms* not unlike those described by Huxley, the naive rejection of that reason in the name of a historically obsolete and illusory concept of culture and individuality leads to contempt of the masses, cynicism, reliance on blind force; these in turn serve the rejected tendency. Philosophy today must face the question whether thought can remain master of itself in this dilemma and thus prepare its theoretical resolution, or whether it is to content itself with playing the part of empty methodology, deluded apologetics, or a guaranteed prescription like Huxley's newest popular mysticism, which fits as well in the brave new world as any ready-made ideology.

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* An extreme example may be cited. Huxley invented 'death conditioning'—i.e. children are brought into the presence of dying persons and are fed sweets and stimulated to play games while they watch the process of death. Thus they are made to associate pleasant ideas with death and to lose their terror of it. *Parents' Magazine* for October 1944 contains an article entitled 'Interview with a Skeleton.' It describes how five-year-old children played with a skeleton 'in order to make their first acquaintance with the inside working of the human body.

"You need bones to hold your skin up," said Johnny, examining this skeleton.

"He does not know he is dead," Martudi said.'

II
Conflicting Panaceas

Today there is almost general agreement that society has lost nothing by the decline of philosophical thinking, for a much more powerful instrument of knowledge has taken its place, namely, modern scientific thought. It is often said that all the problems that philosophy has tried to solve are either meaningless or can be solved by modern experimental methods. In fact, one of the dominant trends in modern philosophy is to hand over to science the work left undone by traditional speculation. Such a trend toward the hypostatization of science characterizes all the schools that are today called positivist. The following remarks are not intended as a detailed discussion of this philosophy; their only aim is to relate it to the present cultural crisis.

The positivists ascribe this crisis to a 'failure of nerve.' There are many faint-hearted intellectuals, they say, who, professing to distrust scientific method, resort to other methods of knowledge, such as intuition or revelation. According to the positivists, what we need is abundant confidence in science. Of course they are not blind to the destructive uses to which science is put; but they claim that such uses of science are perverted. Is this really so? The objective progress of science and its application, technology, do not justify the current idea that science is destructive only when perverted and necessarily constructive when adequately understood.

Science could surely be put to better uses. However, it is not at all certain that the way of realization of the good potentialities of science is the same as its present road. The positivists seem to forget that natural science as they conceive it is above all an auxiliary means of production,

one element among many in the social process. Hence, it is impossible to determine *a priori* what role science plays in the actual advancement or retrogression of society. Its effect in this respect is as positive or negative as is the function it assumes in the general trend of the economic process.

Science today, its difference from other intellectual forces and activities, its division into specific fields, its procedures, contents, and organization, can be understood only in relation to the society for which it functions. Positivist philosophy, which regards the tool 'science' as the automatic champion of progress, is as fallacious as other glorifications of technology. Economic technocracy expects everything from the emancipation of the material means of production. Plato wanted to make philosophers the masters; the technocrats want to make engineers the board of directors of society. Positivism is philosophical technocracy. It specifies as the prerequisite for membership in the councils of society an exclusive faith in mathematics. Plato, a eulogist of mathematics, conceived of rulers as administrative experts, engineers of the abstract. Similarly, the positivists consider engineers to be philosophers of the concrete, since they apply science, of which philosophy—in so far as it is tolerated at all—is merely a derivative. Despite all their differences, both Plato and the positivists think that the way to save humanity is to subject it to the rules and methods of scientific reasoning. The positivists, however, adapt philosophy to science, *i.e.*, to the requirements of practice instead of adapting practice to philosophy. For them thought, in the very act of functioning as *ancilla administrationis*, becomes the *rector mundi*.

A few years ago the positivist evaluation of the present cultural crisis was presented in three articles that analyze the issues at stake with great clarity.* Sidney Hook contends that the present cultural crisis arises from 'a loss of confidence in scientific method.' He bewails the numerous intellectuals who aim at a knowledge and a truth that are not identical with science. He says they rely on self-evidentness, intuition, *Wesenserschauung*, revelation, and other doubtful sources of information, instead of doing some honest research, experimenting, and drawing their conclusions scientifically. He denounces the promoters of all sorts of metaphysics, rebukes Protestant and Catholic philosophies and their

*Sidney Hook, 'The New Failure of Nerve'; John Dewey, 'Anti-Naturalism in Extremis'; Ernest Nagel, 'Malicious Philosophies of Science'; *Partisan Review*, Jan.–Feb. 1943, x, 1, pp. 2–57. Parts of these articles are contained in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, edited by Y. H. Krikorian, Columbia University Press, 1944.

witting or unwitting alliances with reactionary forces. Although he maintains a critical attitude toward liberal economy, he advocates the 'tradition of the free market in the world of ideas.'*

John Dewey† attacks anti-naturalism, which has 'prevented science from completing its career and fulfilling its constructive potentialities.' Ernest Nagel, discussing 'malicious philosophies,' refutes several specific arguments advanced by metaphysicians to deny that the logic of natural science is a sufficient intellectual basis for moral attitudes. These three polemic articles, like many other statements by the authors, merit great respect for their uncompromising stand against the various heralds of authoritarian ideologies. Our critical remarks pertain strictly and exclusively to objective theoretical differences. But before analyzing the positivist remedy, we shall discuss the cure proposed by their opponents.

The positivist attack on certain scheming and artificial revivals of obsolete ontologies is doubtless justified. The promoters of these revivals, highly cultured as they may be, are betraying the last remnants of Western culture by making its rescue their philosophical business. Fascism revived old methods of domination that under modern conditions have proved unspeakably cruder than their pristine forms; these philosophers revive authoritarian systems of thought that under modern conditions prove infinitely more naive, arbitrary, and untruthful than they were originally. Well-meaning metaphysicians, by their semi-learned demonstrations of the true, the good, and the beautiful as eternal values of scholasticism, destroy the last bit of meaningfulness that such ideas might have for independent thinkers tempted to oppose the powers that be. Such ideas are nowadays promoted as if they were commodities, while formerly they were used to oppose the effects of commercial culture.

Today there is a general tendency to revive past theories of objective reason in order to give some philosophical foundation to the rapidly disintegrating hierarchy of generally accepted values. Along with pseudo-religious or half-scientific mind cures, spiritualism, astrology, cheap brands of past philosophies such as Yoga, Buddhism, or mysticism, and popular adaptations of classical objectivistic philosophies, medieval ontologies are recommended for modern use. But the transition from objective to subjective reason was not an accident, and the process of development of ideas cannot arbitrarily at any given moment be reversed.

* Op. cit. pp. 3–4.

† 'Anti-Naturalism in Extremis,' op. cit. p. 26.

If subjective reason in the form of enlightenment has dissolved the philosophical basis of beliefs that have been an essential part of Western culture, it has been able to do so because this basis proved to be too weak. Their revival, therefore, is completely artificial: it serves the purpose of filling a gap. The philosophies of the absolute are offered as an excellent instrument to save us from the chaos. Sharing the fate of all the doctrines, good or bad, that pass the tests of present-day social mechanisms of selection, objectivistic philosophies become standardized for specific uses. Philosophical ideas serve the needs of religious or enlightened, progressive or conservative groups. The absolute becomes itself a means, objective reason a scheme for subjective purposes, general as they may be.

Modern Thomists* occasionally describe their metaphysics as a wholesome or useful supplement to pragmatism, and they are probably right. Indeed, philosophical adaptations of established religions perform a function that is useful for the powers that be: they transform the surviving remnants of mythological thought into workable devices for mass culture. The more these artificial renaissances strive to keep intact the letter of the original doctrines, the more they distort the original meaning, for truth is forged in an evolution of changing and conflicting ideas. Thought is faithful to itself largely through being ready to contradict itself, while preserving, as inherent elements of truth, the memory of the processes by which it was reached. The conservatism of modern philosophical revivals with respect to cultural elements is self-delusion. Like modern religion, neo-Thomists cannot help furthering the pragmatization of life and the formalization of thought. They contribute to dissolving indigenous beliefs, and make faith a matter of expediency.

The pragmatization of religion, however blasphemous it may appear in many respects—as in the linking of religion and hygiene—is not merely the result of its adaptation to the conditions of industrial civilization, but is rooted in the very essence of any kind of systematic theology. Exploitation of nature can be traced back to the first chapters of the Bible. All creatures are to be subject to man. Only the methods and manifestations of that subjection have changed. But, while original Thomism could achieve its goal of adapting Christianity to contemporary scientific and political

*This important metaphysical school includes some of the most responsible historians and writers of our day. The critical remarks here bear exclusively on the trend by which independent philosophical thought is being superseded by dogmatism.

forms, neo-Thomism is in a precarious position. Because the exploitation of nature depended in the Middle Ages upon a relatively static economy, science in that era was static and dogmatic. Its relationship with dogmatic theology could be relatively harmonious, and Aristotelianism was easily absorbed into Thomism. But such harmony is impossible today, and the neo-Thomists' use of categories such as cause, purpose, force, soul, entity, is necessarily uncritical. While for Thomas these metaphysical ideas represented scientific knowledge at its peak, their function in modern culture has completely changed.

Unfortunately for the neo-Thomists, the concepts that they claim to derive from their theological doctrines no longer form the backbone of scientific thought. They cannot integrate theology and contemporary natural science in a hierarchical intellectual system, as Thomas did in emulation of Aristotle and Boethius, because the findings of modern science contradict the scholastic *ordo* and Aristotelian metaphysics too patently. Today no system of education, not even the most reactionary, is permitted to look at quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity as matters apart from the main principles of thought. To bring their standpoint into harmony with present-day natural science, neo-Thomists must, therefore, invent all sorts of intellectual gadgets. Their plight is reminiscent of the dilemma of those astronomers who at the dawn of modern astronomy tried to save the Ptolemaic system by adding to it the most complicated auxiliary constructions, claiming that these preserved the system in spite of all changes.

Unlike their master, neo-Thomists do not take the pains really to deduce the content of contemporary physics from the cosmology of the Bible. The intricacies of the electronic structure of matter, not to mention the theory of exploding space, would indeed make the undertaking difficult. Thomas, if he were living today, would probably be facing the issue and would either condemn science for philosophical reasons or else turn heretic; he would not be attempting a superficial synthesis of incompatible elements. But his epigoni cannot take such a stand: the latest dogmatists must negotiate between heavenly and earthly, ontological and logico-empiricist physics. Their method is to agree *in abstracto* that even non-ontological descriptions may have a certain degree of truth, or to attribute rationality to science in so far as it is mathematical, or to make similar doubtful concordats in the philosophical realm. By this procedure ecclesiastical philosophy gives the impression that modern physical science is integrated into its perennial system, whereas this

system is merely an obsolete form of the very theory it claims to integrate. Indeed, this system is patterned after the same ideal of domination as scientific theory. There is the same underlying purpose of mastering reality, not at all of criticizing it.

The social function of these revivals of systems of objectivist philosophy, religion, or superstitions, is to reconcile individual thinking to modern forms of mass manipulation. In this respect the effects of the philosophical revival of Christianity are not so different from those of the revival of heathen mythology in Germany. The remnants of German mythology were a force for covert resistance to bourgeois civilization. Under the surface of the consciously accepted dogma and order, old pagan memories smoldered as a folk creed. They had inspired German poetry, music, and philosophy. Once rediscovered and manipulated as elements of mass education, their antagonism to the prevailing forms of reality died out, and they became tools of modern politics.

Something analogous is being done to Catholic tradition by the neo-Thomist campaign. Like the German neo-pagans, the neo-Thomists are streamlining old ideologies, trying to adapt them to modern purposes. By doing so they compromise with existing evil, as established churches have always done. At the same time they unwittingly dissolve the last remnants of that spirit of binding faith which they are trying to promote. They formalize their own religious ideas in order to adjust them to reality. Necessarily they are more interested in stressing the abstract justification of religious doctrines than their specific content. This brings clearly to light the dangers that threaten religion through the formalization of reason. Unlike missionary work in the traditional sense, the neo-Thomist teachings consist less of Christian stories and dogmas than of arguments about why religious beliefs and modes of living are advisable in our present situation. Such a pragmatic approach, however, actually affects the religious concepts that they appear to leave untouched. The neo-Thomist ontology, made to order, rots the core of the ideas it proclaims. The religious end is perverted to a mundane means. Neo-Thomism is little concerned with belief in the *Mater dolorosa* for her own sake—a religious concept that has been the inspiration of so much great European art and poetry. It concentrates on belief in belief as a good remedy for today's social and psychological difficulties.

To be sure, there is no lack of exegetic efforts devoted, for instance, to the 'wisdom that is Mary.' But there is something artificial in these efforts. Their forced naïveté is in contrast to the general process of formalization,

which they take for granted, and which is ultimately rooted in religious philosophy itself. Even the writings of medieval Christianism, from early patristic days on, particularly those of Thomas Aquinas, show a strong disposition to formalize the basic elements of Christian faith. This tendency may be traced back to so august a precedent as the identification of Christ with *logos*, at the beginning of the fourth Gospel. The genuine experiences of the early Christians have been subordinated to rational purposes throughout the history of the Church. The work of Thomas Aquinas marked a decisive phase in this development. Aristotelian philosophy, with its inherent empiricism, had become more timely than Platonic speculation.

From the very beginning of ecclesiastical history, enlightenment was by no means extraneous to the church or driven into the limbo of heresy, but took its course largely within the church. Thomas helped the Catholic Church to absorb the new scientific movement by reinterpreting the contents of Christian religion by the liberal methods of analogy, induction, conceptual analysis, deduction from allegedly evident axioms, and through the use of Aristotelian categories, which at his time still corresponded to the level reached by empirical science. His tremendous conceptual apparatus, his philosophical build-up of Christianity, gave religion an appearance of autonomy that made it for a long time independent of and yet compatible with the intellectual progress of urban society. He made the Catholic doctrine a most valuable tool for princes and the burgher class. Thomas was indeed successful. For succeeding centuries society was willing to entrust the clergy with the administration of that highly developed ideological instrument.

However, despite its ideological processing of religion, medieval scholasticism did not turn religion into mere ideology. Although according to Thomas Aquinas the objects of religious faith, such as the Trinity, cannot be at the same time objects of science, his work, siding with Aristotle against Platonism, opposed the efforts to conceive the two realms as being altogether heterogeneous. To him the truths of religion were as concrete as any scientific truth. Such undisturbed confidence in the realism of the rational scholastic apparatus was shattered by the Enlightenment. Thomism has since become a theology with a bad conscience, as is clearly revealed by the twists of its modern philosophical versions. Today its sponsors are obliged to ponder cautiously how much of scientifically doubtful assertions people may still be willing to swallow. They seem to be aware that the inductive methods of reasoning still important in

Aristotelian orthodoxy must be left exclusively to secular research, in order to keep theology strictly aloof from embarrassing investigations. If Thomism is artificially kept from entering into conflict or even interaction with modern science, both intellectuals and the uneducated can accept religion as Thomism promotes it.

The more neo-Thomism withdraws into the realm of spiritual concepts, the more it becomes a servant of profane aims. In politics it can be made a sanction of all kinds of undertakings, and in daily life a ready medicine. Hook and his friends are right in contending that in view of the ambiguous theoretical foundations of its dogmas, it is solely a matter of time and geography whether they are used to justify democratic or authoritarian policies.

Neo-Thomism, like any other dogmatic philosophy, tries to stop thinking at a certain point, in order to create a preserve for some supreme being or value, be it political or religious. The more dubious these absolutes become—and in the era of formalized reason they have become dubious indeed—the more staunchly do their partisans defend them, and the less scrupulous are they about promoting their cults by other than purely intellectual means—by resort, if necessary, to the sword as well as the pen. Because the absolutes are unconvincing on their own merits, they must be vindicated by some kind of up-to-date theory. The effort toward such vindication is reflected in an almost spasmodic desire to exclude any ambiguous trait, any element of evil from the concept thus glorified—a desire that is, in Thomism, difficult to reconcile with the negative prophetic vision of the damned, who must suffer tortures 'ut de his electi gaudeant, cum in his Dei justitiam contemplantur, et dum se evasisse eas cognoscunt.'* Today the urge to establish an absolute principle as a real power, or a real power as the absolute principle, persists; only if the supreme value is at the same time the supreme power, it would seem, can it be regarded as truly absolute.

This identity of goodness, perfection, power, and reality is inherent in traditional European philosophy. Always the philosophy of groups that held or strove for power, it is clearly stated in Aristotelianism and forms the backbone of Thomism despite the latter's truly profound doctrine that

** Summa theologica*, pt. 3, suppl. 'Because the elect rejoice therein when they see God's justice in them, and realize that they have escaped them.' Thomas Aquinas, Literary translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 21, London, 1922, p. 204.

the being of the absolute can be called being only by analogy. While according to the Gospel God suffered and died, he is according to the philosophy of Thomas* incapable of suffering or change. By means of this doctrine, official Catholic philosophy tried to escape the contradiction between God as ultimate truth and as a reality. It conceived of a reality that has no negative element and that is not subject to change. Thus the Church was able to maintain the idea of eternal natural law founded on the basic structure of being, an idea so essential in Western culture. But the renunciation of a negative element in the absolute, and the resultant dualism—God on the one hand, and a sinful world on the other—implied an arbitrary sacrifice of the intellect. By this the Church prevented the deterioration of religion and its replacement by a pantheistic deification of historical process. It avoided the dangers of German and Italian mysticism, as inaugurated by Master Eckhart, Nicolaus Cusanus, and Giordano Bruno, which tried to overcome the dualism by unshackled thought.

Their recognition of the earthly element in God proved to be a stimulus to physical science—whose subject matter seemed to be vindicated and even sanctified by this inclusion in the absolute—but detrimental to religion and intellectual poise. Mysticism started out to make God dependent upon man as man depended upon God, and ended logically in the announcement of God's death. Thomism, however, held intelligence under a rigid discipline. It stopped thought in the face of isolated and therefore contradictory concepts—God and world, which were mechanically connected by a static and ultimately irrational hierarchical system. The very idea of God becomes self-contradictory: an entity that is supposed to be absolute yet does not include change.

The adversaries of neo-Thomism justly point out that dogmatism sooner or later brings thought to a standstill. But is not the neo-positivist doctrine as dogmatic as the glorification of any absolute? They try to make us accept 'a scientific or experimental philosophy of life in which all values are tested by their causes and consequences.'† They confer responsibility for the present intellectual crisis upon 'the limitation of the authority of science, and the institution of methods other than those of controlled experimentation for discovering the natures and values of things.'‡ To read Hook, one would never imagine that such enemies of

* *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, 16.

† Hook, op. cit. p. 10.

‡ Nagel, 'Malicious Philosophies of Science,' op. cit. p. 41.

mankind as Hitler have actually any great confidence in scientific methods, or that the German ministry of propaganda consistently used controlled experimentation, testing all values 'by their causes and consequences.' Like any existing creed, science can be used to serve the most diabolical social forces, and scientism is no less narrow-minded than militant religion. Mr. Nagel merely betrays the intolerance of his doctrine when he states that any effort to limit the authority of science is obviously malicious.

Science enters upon doubtful ground when it lays claim to a censorial power the exercise of which on the part of other institutions it denounced in its revolutionary past. Anxiety lest scientific authority be undermined has seized scholars at the very time when science has become generally accepted and even tends to be repressive. The positivists would discriminate against any kind of thought that does not conform perfectly to the postulate of organized science. They transfer the principle of the closed shop to the world of ideas. The general monopolistic trend goes so far as to engulf the theoretical concept of truth. This trend and the concept of a 'free market in the world of ideas' advocated by Hook are not as antagonistic as he thinks. Both reflect a businesslike attitude toward matters of the spirit, a preoccupation with success.

Far from excluding competition, industrialistic culture has always organized research on a competitive basis. At the same time this research is strictly supervised and made to conform to established patterns. Here we see how competitive and authoritative control work hand in hand. Such co-operation is sometimes useful for a limited purpose—for instance, in the production of the best baby foods, super-explosives, and propaganda methods; but one could hardly claim that it contributes to the progress of real thought. There is no clear-cut distinction between liberalism and authoritarianism in modern science. In actual fact, liberalism and authoritarianism tend to interact in a way that helps to vest an ever more rigid rational control in the institutions of an irrational world.

Despite its protest against being accused of dogmatism, scientific absolutism, like the 'obscurantism' it assails, must fall back on self-evident principles. The sole difference is that neo-Thomism is aware of such presuppositions, while positivism is completely naive about them. What matters is not so much that a theory may rest on self-evident principles—one of the most intricate of logical problems—as that neo-positivism practices the very thing for which it attacks its adversaries. As long as it maintains

this attack, it must justify its own ultimate principles, the most important of which is that of the identity of truth and science. It must make clear why it recognizes certain procedures as scientific. This is the philosophical issue that will decide whether confidence in scientific method, Hook's solution of the current menacing situation, is a blind belief or a rational principle.

The three articles in question do not go into this problem. But there are some indications of how the positivists would solve it. Mr. Hook points to one difference between scientific and unscientific statements. The validity of the latter, he says, is decided by personal feelings, while that of scientific judgments 'is established by methods of public verification open to all who submit themselves to its disciplines.'* The term 'discipline' denotes the rules codified in the most advanced manuals and successfully used by scientists in laboratories. Certainly these procedures are typical of contemporary ideas about scientific objectivity. The positivists, however, seem to confuse such procedures with truth itself. Science should expect philosophical thought, as put forward by either philosophers or scientists, to account for the nature of truth rather than simply to boost scientific methodology as the ultimate definition of truth. Positivism dodges the issue by contending that philosophy is merely the classification and formalization of scientific methods. The postulates of semantic criticism, like the postulate of relatedness or the principle of the reduction of complicated statements to elementary propositions, are presented as such formalization. By denying an autonomous philosophy and a philosophical concept of truth, positivism hands science over to the hazards of historical developments. Because science is an element of the social process, its investiture as *arbiter veritatis* would make truth itself subject to changing social standards. Society would be deprived of any intellectual means of resistance to a bond that social critiques have always denounced.

It is true that even in Germany, the notion of Nordic mathematics, physics, and similar nonsense played a greater role in political propaganda than in the universities; but this was due to the momentum of science itself and to the requirements of German armament rather than to any attitude of positivist philosophy, which after all reflects the character of science at a given historical stage. If organized science had yielded completely to the Nordic requirements, and had accordingly crystallized a consistent methodology, positivism would eventually have had to accept

*Hook, op. cit. p. 6.

it, just as elsewhere it has accepted the patterns of empirical sociology shaped by administrative needs and conventional restrictions. By compliantly making science the theory of philosophy, positivism disavows the spirit of science itself.

Hook says that his philosophy 'does not rule out on *a priori* grounds the existence of supernatural entities and forces.'* If we take this admission seriously, we may expect, under certain circumstances, the resurrection of exactly the same entities, or rather spirits, whose exorcism is the core of scientific thinking as a whole. Positivism would have to consent to such a relapse into mythology.

Dewey indicates another way of differentiating the science that is to be accepted from the science that is to be condemned: 'the naturalist ("naturalism" is used to differentiate the various positivistic schools from the protagonists of supranaturalism) is one who of necessity has respect for the conclusions of natural science.'† Modern positivists seem inclined to accept the natural sciences, primarily physics, as the model for correct methods of thinking. Perhaps Mr. Dewey gives the main motive for this irrational predilection when he writes: 'Modern methods of experimental observation have wrought a profound transformation in the subject matters of astronomy, physics, chemistry and biology' and 'the change wrought in them has exercised the deepest influence upon human relations.'‡ It is true that science, like a thousand other factors, has played a role in bringing about good or evil historical changes; but this does not prove that science is the sole power by which humanity can be saved. If Dewey means to say that scientific changes usually cause changes in the direction of a better social order, he misinterprets the interaction of economic, technical, political, and ideological forces. The death factories in Europe cast as much significant light on the relations between science and cultural progress as does the manufacture of stockings out of air.

The positivists reduce science to the procedures employed in physics and its branches; they deny the name of science to all theoretical efforts not in accord with what they abstract from physics as its legitimate methods. It must be observed here that the division of all human truth into science and humanities is itself a social product that was hypostatized

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* Ibid. p. 7.

† Dewey, op. cit. p. 26.

‡ Ibid. p. 26.

by the organization of the universities and ultimately by some philosophical schools, particularly those of Rickert and Max Weber. The so-called practical world has no place for truth, and therefore splits it to conform it to its own image: the physical sciences are endowed with so-called objectivity, but emptied of human content; the humanities preserve the human content, but only as ideology, at the expense of truth.

The dogmatism of the positivists becomes obvious if we scrutinize the ultimate legitimation of their principle, although they might consider such an attempt completely devoid of sense. The positivists object that Thomists and all other non-positivist philosophers use irrational means, especially intuitions not controlled by experimentation. Conversely, they claim that their own insights are scientific, holding that their cognition of science is based upon the observation of science; that is, they claim that they treat science in the same way as science treats its own objects by experimentally verifiable observation. But the crucial question is: How is it possible to determine what justly may be called science and truth, if the determination itself presupposes the methods of achieving scientific truth? The same vicious circle is involved in any justification of scientific method by the observation of science: How is the principle of observation itself to be justified? When a justification is requested, when someone asks why observation is the proper guarantee of truth, the positivists simply appeal to observation again. But their eyes are closed. Instead of interrupting the machine-like functioning of research, the mechanisms of fact-finding, verification, classification, et cetera, and reflecting on their meaning and relation to truth, the positivists reiterate that science proceeds by observation and describe circumstantially how it functions. Of course they will say that it is not their concern to justify or prove the principle of verification—that they merely want to talk scientific sense. In other words, in refusing to verify their own principle—that no statement is meaningful unless verified—they are guilty of *petitio principii*, begging the question.

Doubtless the logical fallacy at the very root of the positivist attitude merely betrays its worship of institutionalized science. Nevertheless, it should not be ignored, since the positivists always boast of the neatness and logical purity of their statements. The *impasse* into which the ultimate justification of the positivist principle of empirical verification leads is an argument against the positivists only because they dub every other philosophical principle dogmatic and irrational. While other dogmatists at least try to justify their principles on the basis of what they call revelation,

intuition, or primary evidence, the positivists try to avoid the fallacy by using such methods naively and denouncing those who practice them deliberately.

Certain methodologists of natural science claim that the basic axioms of a science can and should be arbitrary. But this does not hold when the meaning of science and truth itself, by which this claim should be justified, is at stake. Even the positivists cannot take for granted what they want to prove, unless they cut short all discussion by declaring that those who do not see are not blessed with grace, which in their language might read: Ideas that do not fit in with symbolic logic have no sense. If science is to be the authority that stands firm against obscurantism—and in demanding this the positivists continue the great tradition of humanism and the Enlightenment—philosophers must set up a criterion for the true nature of science. Philosophy must formulate the concept of science in a way that expresses human resistance to the threatening relapse into mythology and madness, rather than further such a relapse by formalizing science and conforming it to the requirements of the existing practice. To be the absolute authority, science must be justified as an intellectual principle, not merely deduced from empirical procedures and then made absolute as truth on the basis of dogmatic criteria of scientific success.

At a certain point, science may conceivably go beyond the method of experimentation. The worth of all the subtle modern positivist volumes dealing with the logical structure of science would then be challenged because their meaning is strictly empirical. Positivists rely on the successes of science as a justification of their own methods. They do not care to found their own recognition of scientific methods, such as experimentation, on intuition or any principle that could be turned against science as it is successfully practised and socially accepted. The logical apparatus in itself, to which some positivists point as a principle different from empiricism, cannot be invoked here, for the guiding logical principles are by no means considered to be self-evident. They represent, as Dewey states, in agreement with Peirce, 'conditions which have been ascertained during the conduct of continued inquiry to be involved in its own successful pursuit.'* These principles 'are derived from examination of methods previously used.'† One cannot see how philosophy justifies the idea that these principles 'are operationally a priori with respect to further

Logic, p. 11.

†Ibid. p. 13.

inquiry,'* or to what extent data derived from observations can be used to oppose illusions claiming to be truth. In positivism, logic, as formalistically as it may be conceived, is derived from empirical procedures, and the schools that call themselves empiriocriticism or logical empiricism prove to be true varieties of old sensualistic empiricism. What has been consistently maintained with regard to empiricism by thinkers so antagonistic in their opinions as Plato and Leibniz, De Maistre, Emerson, and Lenin, holds for its modern followers.

Empiricism abolishes the principles by which science and empiricism itself could possibly be justified. Observation in itself is not a principle, but a pattern of behavior, a *modus procedendi*, which at any time may lead to its own abolition. If at any time science should change its methods, and if observation, as it is practiced today, were no longer observable, it would be necessary to modify the 'philosophical' principle of observation and revise philosophy accordingly, or to uphold this principle as an irrational dogma. This weakness of positivism is covered by the positivists' implicit assumption that the general empirical procedures used by science correspond naturally to reason and truth. This optimistic belief is perfectly legitimate for any scientist engaged in actual, non-philosophical research, but for a philosopher it seems the self-delusion of a naive absolutism. In a way, even the irrational dogmatism of the church is more rational than a rationalism so ardent that it overshoots its own rationality. An official body of scientists, according to positivist theory, is more independent of reason than the college of cardinals, since the latter must at least refer to the Gospels.

The positivists say on the one hand that science should speak for itself, and on the other that science is a mere tool, and tools are inarticulate, however overwhelming their achievements. Whether the positivists like it or not, the philosophy they teach consists of ideas and is more than a tool. According to their philosophy, words, instead of having meaning, have only function. The paradox that their philosophy has meaninglessness as its meaning could indeed serve as an excellent beginning for dialectical thought. But at this very point their philosophy ends. Dewey seems to sense this weakness when he states: 'Until naturalists have applied their principles and methods to formulation of such topics as mind, consciousness, self, etc., they will be at a serious disadvantage.'† It

*Ibid. p. 14.

†'Anti-Naturalism in Extremis,' p. 28.

is an empty promise that some day positivism will solve the essential problems it has been too busy to solve up to now. Not by accident has positivism, after some straightforward declarations by Carnap and others in the direction of crude materialism, acquired a certain reluctance to tackle such delicate matters. The very methodological and theoretical structure of neo-positivism precludes doing justice to the problems indicated by 'such topics as mind, consciousness, self, etc.' The positivists have no right to look down on intuitionism. These two antagonistic schools suffer from the same disability: at a certain point both block critical thinking by authoritarian statements, whether about the supreme intelligence or about science as its surrogate.

Both positivism and neo-Thomism are limited truths, ignoring the contradiction inherent in their principles. Consequently, both try to assume a despotic role in the realm of thought. The positivists overlook the fact that their deficiency is fundamental, and attribute their ineffectiveness in the face of the present intellectual crisis to certain minor omissions—for instance, to their failure to offer a plausible theory of value. Hook asserts 'the competence of scientific inquiry to evaluate' the claims of vested interests in social life, of inequitable privilege, of anything that is put forward as 'a national class or racial truth.'* He wants the values to be tested. Nagel likewise declares that 'all the elements of scientific analysis, observation, imaginative reconstruction, dialectic elaboration of hypotheses, and experimental verification—must be employed.'† He probably has in mind the testing of the 'causes and consequences' of values referred to by Hook, and means that we should know exactly why we want something and what will happen if we go after it—that ideals and credos should be examined carefully to see what would happen if they were put into practice. This became the function of science with respect to values as defined by Max Weber, a positivist at heart. Weber, however, differentiated sharply between scientific knowledge and values, and did not believe that experimental science could itself overcome social antagonisms and politics. But it is quite in line with the ideas of positivism to reduce what eludes it as 'values' to facts, and to represent things of the spirit as reified, as a kind of special commodity or cultural good. Independent philosophical thinking, critical and negative as it is, should rise above both the concept of values and the idea of the absolute validity of facts.

*Op. cit. p. 5.

†Op. cit. p. 57.

The positivists only superficially escape the failure of nerve. They profess confidence. What Dewey calls organized intelligence, they feel, is the only agency that will be able to settle the problem of social stability or revolution. This optimism, however, actually conceals a greater political defeatism than the pessimism of Weber, who hardly believed that the interests of social classes could be reconciled by science.

Modern science, as positivists understand it, refers essentially to statements about facts, and therefore presupposes the reification of life in general and of perception in particular. It looks upon the world as a world of facts and things, and fails to connect the transformation of the world into facts and things with the social process. The very concept of 'fact' is a product—a product of social alienation; in it, the abstract object of exchange is conceived as a model for all objects of experience in the given category. The task of critical reflection is not merely to understand the various facts in their historical development—and even this has immeasurably wider implications than positivist scholasticism has ever dreamed of—but also to see through the notion of fact itself, in its development and therefore in its relativity. The so-called facts ascertained by quantitative methods, which the positivists are inclined to regard as the only scientific ones, are often surface phenomena that obscure rather than disclose the underlying reality. A concept cannot be accepted as the measure of truth if the ideal of truth that it serves in itself presupposes social processes that thinking cannot accept as ultimates. The mechanical cleavage between origin and thing is one of the blind spots of dogmatic thinking, and to remedy it is one of the most important tasks of a philosophy that does not mistake the congealed form of reality for a law of truth.

By its identification of cognition with science, positivism restricts intelligence to functions necessary to the organization of material already patterned according to that very commercial culture which intelligence is called upon to criticize. Such restriction makes intelligence the servant of the apparatus of production, rather than its master, as Hook and his fellow positivists would like it to be. The content, methods, and categories of science are not above social conflicts, nor are these conflicts of such a nature that people would agree to unconfined experimentation with respect to basic values just in order to straighten them out. Only under ideally harmonious conditions could progressive historical changes be brought about by the authority of science. Positivists may be well aware of this fact, but they do not face the corollary that science has a relative

function, determined by philosophical theory. The positivists are just as over-idealistic in their judgment of social practice as they are over-realistic in their contempt of theory. If theory is reduced to a mere instrument, all theoretical means of transcending reality become metaphysical nonsense. By the same distortion, reality, thus glorified, is conceived as devoid of all objective character that might, by its inner logic, lead to a better reality.

As long as society is what it is, it seems more helpful and honest to face the antagonism between theory and practice than to obscure it by the concept of an organized intelligence at work. This idealistic and irrational hypostatization is closer to the *Weltgeist* of Hegel than his captious critics think. Their own absolute science is made to look like truth, while in fact science is only an element of truth. In positivist philosophy science has even more traits of a holy spirit than the *Weltgeist*, which, following the tradition of German mysticism, explicitly includes all the negative elements of history. It is not clear whether Hook's concept of intelligence implies the definite prediction that social harmony will ensue from experimentation, but it is certain that confidence in scientific tests as regards so-called values depends upon an intellectualistic theory of social change.

In their moral philosophy the positivists, epigoni of eighteenth-century Enlightenment as they are, turn out to be disciples of Socrates, who taught that knowledge necessarily produces virtue, just as ignorance necessarily implies wickedness. Socrates tried to emancipate virtue from religion. Later this theory was upheld by Pelagius, the British monk, who doubted that grace is a condition of moral perfection, and maintained that doctrine and law are its fundaments. The positivists would probably disavow this august pedigree of theirs. On the pre-philosophical level, they would certainly subscribe to the common experience that well-informed people often make mistakes. But if so, why expect intellectual salvation in philosophy simply through more thorough information? The expectation makes sense only if the positivists uphold the Socratic equation of knowledge and virtue, or some similar rationalistic principle. Today's controversy between the prophets of observation and those of self-evidence is a weaker form of the dispute of fifteen hundred years ago over *gratia inspirationis*. Modern Pelagians stand against neo-Thomists as their prototype stood against St. Augustine.

It is by no means the dubiousness of the naturalistic anthropology that makes positivism a poor philosophy; it is rather the lack of self-reflection, its incapacity to understand its own philosophical implications in ethics as

well as in epistemology. This is what renders its thesis just another panacea, valiantly defended, but futile because of its abstractness and primitiveness. Neo-positivism insists rigidly upon the unbroken interconnection of sentences, on the complete subordination of each element of thought to the abstract rules of scientific theory. But the foundations of their own philosophy are laid in a most desultory manner. Looking contemptuously upon most of the great philosophical systems of the past, they seem to think that the long sequences of empirically unverifiable thoughts contained in those systems are more uncertain, superstitious, nonsensical, in short more 'metaphysical,' than their own relatively isolated assumptions that are simply taken for granted and made the basis of their intellectual relation to the world. The preference for uncomplicated words and sentences that can be grouped at a glance is one of the anti-intellectual, anti-humanistic tendencies apparent in the development of modern language, as well as in cultural life in general. It is a symptom of that same failure of nerve against which positivism claims it is fighting.

The contention that the positivist principle has more affinity with the humanistic ideas of freedom and justice than other philosophies is almost as grave an error as the similar claim of the Thomists. Many representatives of modern positivism work for the realization of these ideas. But their very love of freedom seems to strengthen their hostility to its vehicle, theoretical thinking. They identify scientism with the interest of humanity. However, the surface appearance or even the thesis of a doctrine rarely offers a clue to the role it plays in society. Draco's code, which gives the impression of bloodthirsty severity, has been one of the greatest forces for civilization. Conversely—in negation of its own content and meaning—the doctrine of Christ from the Crusaders to modern colonization has been associated with bloody ruthlessness. Positivists would indeed be better philosophers if they realized the contradiction between any philosophical idea and social reality, and therefore emphasized the anti-moralistic consequences of their own principle, as did the most consistent enlighteners, such as Mandeville and Nietzsche, who did not insist upon any easy compatibility of their philosophy with official ideologies, progressive or reactionary. Indeed, the denial of such harmony was the core of their work.

The crime of modern intellectuals against society lies not so much in their aloofness but in their sacrifice of contradictions and complexities of thought to the exigencies of so-called common sense. The expertly processed mentality of this century retains the cave man's hostility toward

the stranger. This is expressed in hatred not only of those who have skin of a different color or wear a different kind of suit, but also of strange and unusual thought, nay, even of thought itself when it follows truth beyond the boundaries delimitated by the requirements of a given social order. Thought today is only too often compelled to justify itself by its usefulness to some established group rather than by its truth. Even if revolt against misery and frustration can be discovered as an element in every consistent work of thought, instrumentality in bringing about reform is no criterion of truth.

The merit of positivism consists in having carried the fight of Enlightenment against mythologies into the sacred realm of traditional logic. However, like modern mythologists, the positivists may be accused of serving a purpose instead of abandoning purpose for truth. The idealists glorified commercial culture by attributing a higher meaning to it. The positivists glorify it by adopting the principle of this culture as the measure of truth, in a manner not unlike that in which modern popular art and literature glorify life as it is—not by idealization or lofty interpretation, but by simply repeating it on canvas, stage, and screen. Neo-Thomism fails democracy, not—as the positivists would have to argue—because its ideas and values are not sufficiently tested in terms of prevailing conditions. Nor is it because neo-Thomism delays the use of 'methods by which alone understanding of, and consequent ability to guide, social relationships can be attained';* Catholicism is famous for such methods. Thomism fails because it is a half-truth. Instead of developing its teachings without caring about their usefulness, its expert propagandists have always adapted them to the changing requirements of the prevailing social forces. In recent years they have also adapted them to the uses of modern authoritarianism, against which, despite its present defeat, the future has yet to be safeguarded. The failure of Thomism lies in its ready acquiescence to pragmatic aims rather than in its lack of practicability. When a doctrine hypostatizes an isolated principle that excludes negation, it is paradoxically predisposing itself to conformism.

Like all ideas and systems that, by offering clear-cut definitions of truth and guiding principles, tend to dominate the cultural scene for a while, both neo-Thomism and neo-positivism charge all evils to doctrines antithetic to their own. The accusations vary according to the prevailing

* Ibid. p. 27.

political forms. In the nineteenth century, when naturalists like Ernst Haeckel accused Christian philosophy of weakening national morale by supranaturalist poison, Christian philosophers hurled back the same reproach at naturalism. Today the opposing schools in this country charge each other with sapping the democratic spirit. They try to bolster up their respective arguments by doubtful excursions into the realm of history. Of course, it is hard to be fair to Thomism, which has seldom failed to lend a hand to oppression wherever oppression has been willing to embrace the Church, and which claims to be a pioneer of freedom.

Dewey's allusion to the reactionary stand of religion in relation to Darwinism does not really tell the whole story. The concept of progress expressed in such biological theories needs a great deal of elaboration, and it may not be long before the positivists join the Thomists in criticizing it. Many times in the history of Western civilization have the Catholic Church and its great teachers helped science emancipate itself from superstition and charlatanism. Dewey seems to think that it is particularly persons of religious belief who have opposed the scientific spirit. This is an intricate problem; but when, in this connection, Dewey cites 'the historian of ideas,'* the latter should remind him that the rise of European science is after all unthinkable without the Church. The Church Fathers carried on a relentless struggle against all kinds of 'failures of nerve,' among them astrology, occultism, and spiritualism, to which some positivistic philosophers of our era have proved less immune than Tertullian, Hippolytus, or St. Augustine.

The relation of the Catholic Church to science varies according as the church is allied with progressive or with reactionary powers. While the Spanish Inquisition helped a rotten court to stifle any sound economic and social reforms, certain popes cultivated relations with the humanistic movement throughout the world. Galileo's enemies had difficulty in undermining his friendship with Urban VIII, and their eventual success can be attributed to Galileo's excursions into the realm of theology and epistemology, rather than necessarily to his scientific views. Vincent of Beauvais, the greatest medieval encyclopedist, referred to the earth as a point in the universe. Urban himself seems to have regarded Copernicus' theory as a worthwhile hypothesis. What the church feared was not natural science in itself; it was quite able to come to terms with science. In

*Ibid. p. 31.

Galileo's case, it was doubtful about the proofs offered by Copernicus and Galileo; therefore, it could at least pretend that its case was based on a defense of rationality against hasty conclusions. Intrigue certainly played a great role in Galileo's condemnation. But an *advocatus diaboli* might well say that the reluctance of certain cardinals to accept Galileo's doctrine was due to the suspicion that it was pseudoscientific, like astrology or today's race theory. Rather than any kind of empiricism or skepticism, Catholic thinkers have espoused a doctrine of man and nature, as contained in the Old and the New Testaments. Offering a certain protection against superstition in scientific and other disguises, this doctrine could have prevented the church from chiming in with the bloodthirsty mob that asserted that it had witnessed sorceries. It did not have to surrender to the majority, as do the demagogues who claim that 'the people are always right,' and who often use this principle to undermine democratic institutions. Yet its participation in witch burnings, the blood on its escutcheon, does not prove its opposition to science. After all, if William James and F. C. S. Schiller could be mistaken about ghosts, the church could be mistaken about witches. What the burnings do reveal is an implicit doubt about its own faith. The ecclesiastical torturers often gave proof of uneasy conscience, as in their miserable quibble that when a man is burned at the stake no blood is shed.

The greatest defect of Thomism is not peculiar to its modern version. It can be traced back to Thomas Aquinas himself, even to Aristotle. This defect lies in its making truth and goodness identical with reality. Both positivists and Thomists seem to feel that the adaptation of man to what they call reality would lead out of the present-day *impasse*. Critical analysis of such conformism would probably bring to light the common foundation of the two schools of thought: both accept as a pattern of behavior an order in which failure or success—temporal or involving the hereafter—plays an integral part. It can be said that this doubtful principle of adapting humanity to what theory recognizes as reality is one root cause of the present intellectual decay. In our day, the hectic desire that people have to adapt themselves to something that has the power to be, whether it is called a fact or an *ens rationale*, has led to a state of irrational rationality. In this era of formalized reason, doctrines follow one another so rapidly that each is regarded as just another ideology, yet each is made a temporary reason for repression and discrimination.

At one time humanism dreamed of uniting humanity by giving it a common understanding of its destination. It thought that it could bring

about a good society by theoretical criticism of contemporary practice, which would then shift over to the right political activity. This seems to have been an illusion. Today words are supposed to be blueprints for action. People think that the requirements of being should be reinforced by philosophy as the servant of being. This is just as much of an illusion, and is shared by positivism and neo-Thomism. The positivist command to conform to facts and common sense instead of to utopian ideas is not so different from the call to obey reality as interpreted by religious institutions, which after all are facts too. Each camp undoubtedly expresses a truth, under the distortion of making it exclusive. Positivism carries its critique of dogmatism to the point of nullifying the principle of truth in the name of which alone the critique makes sense. Neo-Thomism upholds the principle so rigidly that truth actually turns into its opposite. Both schools are heteronomous in character. One tends to replace autonomous reason by the automatism of streamlined methodology, the other by the authority of a dogma.

III
The Revolt of Nature

If reason is declared incapable of determining the ultimate aims of life and must content itself with reducing everything it encounters to a mere tool, its sole remaining goal is simply the perpetuation of its co-ordinating activity. This activity was once ascribed to the autonomous 'subject.' However, the process of subjectivization has affected all philosophical categories: it has not relativized and preserved them in a better-structured unity of thought, but has reduced them to the status of facts to be catalogued. This also holds true for the category of subject. Dialectical philosophy since Kant's day has tried to preserve the heritage of critical transcendentalism, above all the principle that the fundamental traits and categories of our understanding of the world depend on subjective factors. Awareness of the task of tracing concepts back to their subjective origins must be present in each step of defining the object. This applies to basic ideas, such as fact, event, thing, object, nature; no less than to psychological or sociological relations. From the time of Kant, idealism has never forgotten this requirement of critical philosophy. Even the neo-Hegelians of the spiritualistic school saw in the self 'the highest form of experience which we have, but . . . not a true form,'* for the idea of subject is itself an isolated concept that must be relativized by philosophical thought. But Dewey, who occasionally seems to join with Bradley in elevating experience to the highest place in metaphysics, declares that 'the self or subject of experience is part and parcel of the

* F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, Oxford, 1930, p. 103.

course of events.'* According to him, 'the organism—the self, the "subject" of action—is a factor *within* experience.'† He reifies the subject. Yet the more all nature is looked upon as 'quite a mess of miscellaneous stuff'‡ ('mess' doubtless only because the structure of nature does not correspond to human use), as mere objects in relation to human subjects, the more is the once supposedly autonomous subject emptied of any content, until it finally becomes a mere name with nothing to denominate. The total transformation of each and every realm of being into a field of means leads to the liquidation of the subject who is supposed to use them. This gives modern industrialist society its nihilistic aspect. Subjectivization, which exalts the subject, also dooms him.

The human being, in the process of his emancipation, shares the fate of the rest of his world. Domination of nature involves domination of man. Each subject not only has to take part in the subjugation of external nature, human and nonhuman, but in order to do so must subjugate nature in himself. Domination becomes 'internalized' for domination's sake. What is usually indicated as a goal—the happiness of the individual, health, and wealth—gains its significance exclusively from its functional potentiality. These terms designate favorable conditions for intellectual and material production. Therefore self-renunciation of the individual in industrialist society has no goal transcending industrialist society. Such abnegation brings about rationality with reference to means and irrationality with reference to human existence. Society and its institutions, no less than the individual himself, bear the mark of this discrepancy. Since the subjugation of nature, in and outside of man, goes on without a meaningful motive, nature is not really transcended or reconciled but merely repressed.

Resistance and revulsion arising from this repression of nature have beset civilization from its beginnings, in the form of social rebellions—as in the spontaneous peasant insurrections of the sixteenth century or the cleverly staged race riots of our own day—as well as in the form of individual crime and mental derangement. Typical of our present era is the manipulation of this revolt by the prevailing forces of civilization itself, the use of the revolt as a means of perpetuating the very conditions

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*John Dewey and others, *Creative Intelligence*, New York, 1917, p. 59.

†*The Philosophy of John Dewey*, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp, Evanston and Chicago, 1939. The Library of Living Philosophers, vol. I, p. 532.

‡Harry Todd Costello, 'The Naturalism of Frederick Woodbridge,' in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, p. 299.

by which it is stirred up and against which it is directed. Civilization as rationalized irrationality integrates the revolt of nature as another means or instrument.

Here it is in order to discuss briefly some of the aspects of this mechanism, e.g. the situation of man in a culture of self-preservation for its own sake; the internalization of domination by the development of the abstract subject, the ego; the dialectical reversal of the principle of domination by which man makes himself a tool of that same nature which he subjugates; the repressed mimetic impulse, as a destructive force exploited by the most radical systems of social domination. Among the intellectual trends that are symptomatic of the interconnection between rulership and revolt, Darwinism will be discussed as an instance, not because more typical philosophical illustrations of the identity of man's domination over and submission to nature are lacking, but because Darwinism is one of the landmarks of popular enlightenment that pointed the way with inescapable logic to the cultural situation of the present day.

One factor in civilization might be described as the gradual replacement of natural selection by rational action. Survival—or, let us say, success—depends upon the adaptability of the individual to the pressures that society brings to bear on him. To survive, man transforms himself into an apparatus that responds at every moment with just the appropriate reaction to the baffling and difficult situations that make up his life. Everyone must be ready to meet any situation. This is doubtless not a feature characteristic of the modern period alone; it has been operative during the entire history of mankind. However, the individual's intellectual and psychological resources have varied with the means of material production. The life of a Dutch peasant or craftsman in the seventeenth century, or of a shop owner in the eighteenth, was certainly much less secure than the life of a workman today. But the emergence of industrialism has brought qualitatively new phenomena in its train. The process of adjustment has now become deliberate and therefore total.

Just as all life today tends increasingly to be subjected to rationalization and planning, so the life of each individual, including his most hidden impulses, which formerly constituted his private domain, must now take the demands of rationalization and planning into account: the individual's self-preservation presupposes his adjustment to the requirements for the preservation of the system. He no longer has room to evade the system. And just as the process of rationalization is no longer the result of the anonymous forces of the market, but is decided in the consciousness of

a planning minority, so the mass of subjects must deliberately adjust themselves: the subject must, so to speak, devote all his energies to being 'in and of the movement of things'* in the terms of the pragmatistic definition. Formerly reality was opposed to and confronted with the ideal, which was evolved by the supposedly autonomous individual; reality was supposed to be shaped in accordance with this ideal. Today such ideologies are compromised and skipped over by progressive thought, which thus unwittingly facilitates the elevation of reality to the status of ideal. Therefore adjustment becomes the standard for every conceivable type of subjective behavior. The triumph of subjective, formalized reason is also the triumph of a reality that confronts the subject as absolute, overpowering.

The contemporary mode of production demands much more flexibility than ever before. The greater initiative needed in practically all walks of life calls for greater adaptability to changing conditions. If a medieval artisan could have adopted another craft, his change-over would have been more radical than that of a person today who becomes successively a mechanic, a salesman, and director of an insurance company. The ever greater uniformity of technical processes makes it easier for men to change jobs. But the greater ease of transition from one activity to another does not mean that more time is left for speculation or for deviations from established patterns. The more devices we invent for dominating nature, the more must we serve them if we are to survive.

Man has gradually become less dependent upon absolute standards of conduct, universally binding ideals. He is held to be so completely free that he needs no standards except his own. Paradoxically, however, this increase of independence has led to a parallel increase of passivity. Shrewd as man's calculations have become as regards his means, his choice of ends, which was formerly correlated with belief in an objective truth, has become witless: the individual, purified of all remnants of mythologies, including the mythology of objective reason, reacts automatically, according to general patterns of adaptation. Economic and social forces take on the character of blind natural powers that man, in order to preserve himself, must dominate by adjusting himself to them. As the end result of the process, we have on the one hand the self, the abstract ego emptied of all substance except its attempt to transform everything in heaven and on earth into means for its preservation, and on

* Dewey, in *Creative Intelligence*.

the other hand an empty nature degraded to mere material, mere stuff to be dominated, without any other purpose than that of this very domination.

For the average man self-preservation has become dependent upon the speed of his reflexes. Reason itself becomes identical with this adjustive faculty. It may seem that present-day man has a much freer choice than his ancestors had, and in a certain sense he has. His freedom has increased tremendously with the increase in productive potentialities. In terms of quantity, a modern worker has a much wider selection of consumer goods than a nobleman of the *ancien régime*. The importance of this historical development must not be underestimated; but before interpreting the multiplication of choices as an increase in freedom, as is done by the enthusiasts of assembly-line production, we must take into account the pressure inseparable from this increase and the change in quality that is concomitant with this new kind of choice. The pressure consists in the continual coercion that modern social conditions put upon everyone; the change may be illustrated by the difference between a craftsman of the old type, who selected the proper tool for a delicate piece of work, and the worker of today, who must decide quickly which of many levers or switches he should pull. Quite different degrees of freedom are involved in driving a horse and in driving a modern automobile. Aside from the fact that the automobile is available to a much larger percentage of the population than the carriage was, the automobile is faster and more efficient, requires less care, and is perhaps more manageable. However, the accretion of freedom has brought about a change in the character of freedom. It is as if the innumerable laws, regulations, and directions with which we must comply were driving the car, not we. There are speed limits, warnings to drive slowly, to stop, to stay within certain lanes, and even diagrams showing the shape of the curve ahead. We must keep our eyes on the road and be ready at each instant to react with the right motion. Our spontaneity has been replaced by a frame of mind which compels us to discard every emotion or idea that might impair our alertness to the impersonal demands assailing us.

The change illustrated by this example extends to most branches of our culture. It is sufficient to compare the methods of persuasion used by the old-fashioned businessman with those of modern advertising—garish neon signs, mammoth placards, deafening loudspeakers. Behind the baby talk of slogans, to which nothing is sacred, is an invisible text proclaiming the power of the industrial concerns that are able to pay for this luxurious

stupidity. Indeed, the initiation fee and the dues of this business fraternity are so high that the small newcomer is defeated before he starts. The invisible text proclaims also the connections and agreements among the dominant companies, and finally the concentrated power of the economic apparatus as a whole.

Although the consumer is, so to speak, given his choice, he does not get a penny's worth too much for his money, whatever the trademark he prefers to possess. The difference in quality between two equally priced popular articles is usually as infinitesimal as the difference in the nicotine content of two brands of cigarettes. Nevertheless, this difference, corroborated by 'scientific tests,' is dinned into the consumer's mind through posters illuminated by a thousand electric light bulbs, over the radio, and by use of entire pages of newspapers and magazines, as if it represented a revelation altering the entire course of the world rather than an illusory fraction that makes no real difference, even for a chain smoker. People can somehow read between the lines of this language of power. They understand, and adjust themselves.

In national-socialist Germany, the various competing economic empires formed a common front against the people, under the mantle of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, and waived their surface differences. But having been subjected to a continuous barrage of propaganda, the people were prepared to adapt themselves passively to new power relations, to allow themselves only the kind of reaction that enabled them to fit into the economic, social, and political setup. Before the Germans learned to do without political independence, they had learned to regard forms of government as merely another pattern to which they must adapt themselves, just as they had adapted their reactions to a machine in the workshop or to the rules of the road. As has been said above, the necessity of adjustment of course existed also in the past; the difference lies in the *tempo* of compliance, in the degree to which this attitude has permeated the whole being of the people and altered the nature of the freedom gained. Above all, it lies in the fact that modern humanity surrenders to this process not like a child who has a natural confidence in authority but like an adult who gives up the individuality that he has acquired. The victory of civilization is too complete to be true. Therefore adjustment in our times involves an element of resentment and suppressed fury.

Intellectually, modern man is less hypocritical than his forefathers of the nineteenth century who glossed over the materialistic practices of society by pious phrases about idealism. Today no one is taken in by this

kind of hypocrisy. But this is not because the contradiction between high-sounding phrases and reality has been abolished. The contradiction has only become institutionalized. Hypocrisy has turned cynical; it does not even expect to be believed. The same voice that preaches about the higher things of life, such as art, friendship, or religion, exhorts the hearer to select a given brand of soap. Pamphlets on how to improve one's speech, how to understand music, how to be saved, are written in the same style as those extolling the advantages of laxatives. Indeed, one expert copywriter may have written any one of them. In the highly developed division of labor, expression has become an instrument used by technicians in the service of industry. A would-be author can go to a school and learn the many combinations that can be contrived from a list of set plots. These schemes have been co-ordinated to a certain degree with the requirements of other agencies of mass culture, particularly those of the film industry. A novel is written with its film possibilities in mind, a symphony or poem is composed with an eye to its propaganda value. Once it was the endeavor of art, literature, and philosophy to express the meaning of things and of life, to be the voice of all that is dumb, to endow nature with an organ for making known her sufferings, or, we might say, to call reality by its rightful name. Today nature's tongue is taken away. Once it was thought that each utterance, word, cry, or gesture had an intrinsic meaning; today it is merely an occurrence.

The story of the boy who looked up at the sky and asked, 'Daddy, what is the moon supposed to advertise?' is an allegory of what has happened to the relation between man and nature in the era of formalized reason. On the one hand, nature has been stripped of all intrinsic value or meaning. On the other, man has been stripped of all aims except self-preservation. He tries to transform everything within reach into a means to that end. Every word or sentence that hints of relations other than pragmatic is suspect. When a man is asked to admire a thing, to respect a feeling or attitude, to love a person for his own sake, he smells sentimentality and suspects that someone is pulling his leg or trying to sell him something. Though people may not ask what the moon is supposed to advertise, they tend to think of it in terms of ballistics or aerial mileage.

The complete transformation of the world into a world of means rather than of ends is itself the consequence of the historical development of the methods of production. As material production and social organization

grow more complicated and reified, recognition of means as such becomes increasingly difficult, since they assume the appearance of autonomous entities. As long as the means of production are primitive, the forms of social organization are primitive. The institutions of the Polynesian tribes reflect the direct and overwhelming pressure of nature. Their social organization has been shaped by their material needs. The old people, weaker than the younger but more experienced, make the plans for hunting, for building bridges, for choosing camp sites, et cetera; the younger must obey. The women, weaker than the men, do not go hunting and do not participate in preparing and eating the big game; their duties are to gather plants and shellfish. The bloody magical rites serve partly to initiate the youth and partly to inculcate a tremendous respect for the power of priests and elders.

What is true of the primitives is true of more civilized communities: the kinds of weapons or machines that man uses at the various stages of his evolution call for certain forms of command and obedience, of co-operation and subordination, and thus are effective also in bringing into being certain legal, artistic, and religious forms. During his long history man has at times acquired such freedom from the immediate pressure of nature that he could think about nature and reality without directly or indirectly thereby planning for his self-preservation. These relatively independent forms of thinking, which Aristotle describes as theoretical contemplation, were particularly cultivated in philosophy. Philosophy aimed at an insight that was not to serve useful calculations but was intended to further understanding of nature in and for itself.

Speculative thought, from the economic point of view, was doubtless a luxury that, in a society based on group domination only a class of people exempt from hard labor could afford. The intellectuals, for whom Plato and Aristotle were the first great European spokesmen, owe their very existence, and their leisure to indulge in speculation, to the system of domination from which they try to emancipate themselves intellectually. The vestiges of this paradoxical situation can be discovered in various systems of thought. Today—and this is certainly progress—the masses know that such freedom for contemplation crops up only occasionally. It was always a privilege of certain groups, which automatically built up an ideology hypostatizing their privilege as a human virtue; thus it served actual ideological purposes, glorifying those exempt from manual labor. Hence the distrust aroused by the group. In our era the intellectual is, indeed, not exempt from the pressure that the economy exerts upon

him to satisfy the ever-changing demands of reality. Consequently, meditation, which looked to eternity, is superseded by pragmatic intelligence, which looks to the next moment. Instead of losing its character as a privilege, speculative thought is altogether liquidated—and this can hardly be called progress. It is true that in this process nature has lost its awesomeness, its *qualitates occultae*, but, completely deprived of the chance to speak through the minds of men even in the distorted language of these privileged groups, nature seems to be taking its revenge.

Modern insensitivity to nature is indeed only a variation of the pragmatic attitude that is typical of Western civilization as a whole. The forms are different. The early trapper saw in the prairies and mountains only the prospects of good hunting; the modern businessman sees in the landscape an opportunity for the display of cigarette posters. The fate of animals in our world is symbolized by an item printed in newspapers of a few years ago. It reported that landings of planes in Africa were often hampered by herds of elephants and other beasts. Animals are here considered simply as obstructors of traffic. This mentality of man as the master can be traced back to the first chapters of Genesis. The few precepts in favor of animals that we encounter in the Bible have been interpreted by the most outstanding religious thinkers, Paul, Thomas Aquinas, and Luther, as pertaining only to the moral education of man, and in no wise to any obligation of man toward other creatures. Only man's soul can be saved; animals have but the right to suffer. 'Some men and women,' wrote a British churchman a few years ago, 'suffer and die for the life, the welfare, the happiness of others. This law is continually seen in operation. The supreme example of it was shown to the world (I write with reverence) on Calvary. Why should animals be exempted from the operation of this law or principle?'* Pope Pius IX did not permit a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals to be founded in Rome because, as he declared, theology teaches that man owes no duty to any animal.† National Socialism, it is true, boasted of its protection of animals, but only in order to humiliate more deeply those 'inferior races' whom they treated as mere nature.

These instances are quoted only in order to show that pragmatic reason is not new. Yet, the philosophy behind it, the idea that reason, the highest

*Edward Westermark, *Christianity and Morals*, New York, 1939, p. 388.
†Ibid. p. 389.

intellectual faculty of man, is solely concerned with instruments, nay, is a mere instrument itself, is formulated more clearly and accepted more generally today than ever before. The principle of domination has become the idol to which everything is sacrificed.

The history of man's efforts to subjugate nature is also the history of man's subjugation by man. The development of the concept of the ego reflects this twofold history.

It is very hard to describe precisely what the languages of the Western world have at any given time purported to connote in the term ego—a notion steeped in vague associations. As the principle of the self endeavoring to win in the fight against nature in general, against other people in particular, and against its own impulses, the ego is felt to be related to the functions of domination, command, and organization. The ego principle seems to be manifested in the outstretched arm of the ruler, directing his men to march or dooming the culprit to execution. Spiritually, it has the quality of a ray of light. In penetrating the darkness, it startles the ghosts of belief and feeling, which prefer to lurk in shadows. Historically, it belongs pre-eminently to an age of caste privilege marked by a cleavage between intellectual and manual labor, between conquerors and conquered. Its dominance is patent in the patriarchal epoch. It could scarcely have played a decisive role in matriarchal days—to recall Bachofen and Morgan—when chthonic deities were worshiped. Nor may one properly ascribe ego or self to the slave of antiquity, to the amorphous mass at the base of the social pyramid.

The principle of domination, based originally on brute force, acquired in the course of time a more spiritual character. The inner voice took the place of the master in issuing commands. The history of Western civilization could be written in terms of the growth of the ego as the underling sublimates, that is internalizes, the commands of his master who has preceded him in self-discipline. From this standpoint, the leader and the elite might be described as having effected coherence and logical connection between the various transactions of daily life. They enforced continuity, regularity, even uniformity in the productive process, primitive though it was. The ego within each subject became the embodiment of the leader. It established a rational nexus between the variegated experiences of different persons. Just as the leader groups his men as foot soldiers and mounted troops, just as he charts the future, so the ego classifies experiences by categories or species and plans the life of the

individual. French sociology* has taught that the hierarchical arrangement of primitive general concepts reflected the organization of the tribe and its power over the individual. It has shown that the whole logical order, the ranking of concepts according to priority and posteriority, inferiority and superiority, and the marking out of their respective domains and boundaries, mirror social relations and the division of labor.

At no time has the notion of the ego shed the blemishes of its origin in the system of social domination. Even such idealized versions as Descartes' doctrine of the ego suggest coercion; Gassendi's objections to the *Meditations* poked fun at the notion of a little spirit, namely, the ego, that from its well-concealed citadel in the brain—*arcem in cerebro tenens*†—or, as the psychologists might say, the receiving-sending station in the brain, edits the reports of the senses and issues its orders to the various parts of the body.

It is instructive to follow Descartes' efforts to find a place for this ego, which is not in nature but remains close enough to nature to influence it. Its first concern is to dominate the passions, that is, nature, so far as it makes itself felt in us. The ego is indulgent to agreeable and wholesome emotions but is stern with anything conducive to sadness. Its central concern must be to keep the emotions from biasing judgments. Mathematics, crystal-clear, imperturbable, and self-sufficient, the classical instrument of formalized reason, best exemplifies the workings of this austere agency. The ego dominates nature. To describe the ego's aims except in terms of its own indefinite persistence would contaminate the concept of the ego.

In Descartes' philosophy, the dualism of ego and nature is somewhat blunted by his traditional Catholicism. The later development of rationalism, and then of subjective idealism, tended increasingly to mediate the dualism by attempting to dissolve the concept of nature—and ultimately all the content of experience—in the ego, conceived as transcendental. But the more radically this trend is developed, the greater is the influence of the old, more naive, and for that reason less irreconcilable dualism of the Cartesian theory of substance in the ego's own domain. The most striking example of this is the extreme subjectivist-transcendental philosophy of Fichte. In his early doctrine, according to which the sole *raison d'être* of the world lies in affording a field of activity for the imperious

*Cf. E. Durkheim, 'De quelques formes primitives de classification,' *L'Année sociologique*, IV, 66, 1903.

†*Oeuvres de Descartes*, Paris, 1904, VII, p. 269.

transcendental self, the relationship between the ego and nature is one of tyranny. The entire universe becomes a tool of the ego, although the ego has no substance or meaning except in its own boundless activity. Modern ideology, though much closer to Fichte than is generally believed, has cut adrift from such metaphysical moorings, and the antagonism between an abstract ego as undisputed master and a nature stripped of inherent meaning is obscured by vague absolutes such as the ideas of progress, success, happiness, or experience.

Nevertheless, nature is today more than ever conceived as a mere tool of man. It is the object of total exploitation that has no aim set by reason, and therefore no limit. Man's boundless imperialism is never satisfied. The dominion of the human race over the earth has no parallel in those epochs of natural history in which other animal species represented the highest forms of organic development. Their appetites were limited by the necessities of their physical existence. Indeed, man's avidity to extend his power in two infinities, the microcosm and the universe, does not arise directly from his own nature, but from the structure of society. Just as attacks of imperialistic nations on the rest of the world must be explained on the basis of their internal struggles rather than in terms of their so-called national character, so the totalitarian attack of the human race on anything that it excludes from itself derives from interhuman relationships rather than from innate human qualities. The warfare among men in war and in peace is the key to the insatiability of the species and to its ensuing practical attitudes, as well as to the categories and methods of scientific intelligence in which nature appears increasingly under the aspect of its most effective exploitation. This form of perception has also determined the way in which human beings visualize each other in their economic and political relationships. The patterns of humanity's way of looking at nature finally reflect on and determine the imaging of humans in the human mind and eliminate the last objective goal that might motivate the process. The repression of desires that society achieves through the ego becomes even more unreasonable not only for the population as a whole but for each individual. The more loudly the idea of rationality is proclaimed and acknowledged, the stronger is the growth in the minds of people of conscious or unconscious resentment against civilization and its agency within the individual, the ego.

How does nature, in all the phases of its oppression, inside and outside the human being, react to this antagonism? What are the psychological, political, and philosophical manifestations of its revolt? Is it possible to

void the conflict by a 'return to nature,' by a revival of old doctrines, or by the creation of new myths?

Each human being experiences the domineering aspect of civilization from his birth. To the child, the father's power seems overwhelming, supernatural in the literal sense of the word. The father's command is reason exempt from nature, an inexorable spiritual force. The child suffers in submitting to this force. It is almost impossible for an adult to remember all the pangs he experienced as a child in heeding innumerable parental admonitions not to stick his tongue out, not to mimic others, not to be untidy or forget to wash behind his ears. In these demands, the child is confronted by the fundamental postulates of civilization. He is forced to resist the immediate pressure of his urges, to differentiate between himself and the environment, to be efficient—in short, to borrow Freud's terminology, to adopt a superego embodying all the so-called principles that his father and other father-like figures hold up to him. The child does not recognize the motive for all these demands. He obeys lest he be scolded or punished, lest he forfeit the love of his parents which he deeply craves. But the displeasure attached to submission persists, and he develops a deep hostility to his father, which is eventually translated into resentment against civilization itself.

The process may be particularly drastic if obedience is enforced less by an individual than by groups—by other children on the playground and in school. They do not argue, they hit. As industrialist society passes into a stage in which the child is directly confronted with collective forces, the part played in his psychological household by discourse, and consequently by thought, decreases. Thus conscience, or the superego, disintegrates. To this we must add the change in the mother's attitude as the transition to formal rationality brings it about. The tremendous good that psychoanalytical enlightenment in all its versions has brought to certain urban groups is at the same time a further step toward a more rationalized and conscious attitude on the part of the mother, on whose instinctual love the child's development depends. She is transformed into a nurse, her friendliness and her insistence become gradually part of a technique. Much as society may gain by making motherhood a science, it deprives the individual of certain influences that formerly had a binding force in social life.

Hatred of civilization is not only an irrational projection of personal psychological difficulties into the world (as it is interpreted in some psychoanalytical writing). The adolescent learns that the renunciations of

instinctual urges expected from him are not adequately compensated, that, for instance, the sublimation of sexual goals required by civilization fails to obtain for him the material security in the name of which it is preached. Industrialism tends more and more to subject sex relations to social domination. The Church mediated between nature and civilization by making marriage a sacrament, still tolerating saturnalia, minor erotic excesses, and even prostitution. In the present era marriage becomes *increasingly the cachet of a social sanction, a payment of dues for membership* in a club of male prerogative for which the women make the rules. For the women, it is also a cachet in the sense of a prize to be striven for, a prize of sanctioned security. The girl who violates the conventions is no longer pitied or condemned for the reason that she is losing her stake in this and the other life; she simply does not realize her opportunities. She is foolish, not tragic. The emphasis shifts completely to the expediency of marriage as an instrument of conformity in the social machinery. Powerful agencies supervise its functioning, and the amusement industry is enlisted as its advertising agency. While society is busily engaged in abolishing the small rackets of prostitution, which make a commerce of love, instinctual life in all its branches is increasingly adapted to the spirit of commercial culture. The frustrations produced by this tendency are profoundly rooted in the civilizing process; they must be understood phylogenetically, not only ontogenetically, for to some extent the psychological complexes reproduce the primitive history of civilization. It is true that in the current phase of civilization these primitive processes are being relived. On this higher level, the conflict centers about the ideals for the sake of which the renunciation is enforced. What fills the adolescent with distress is, above all, his dim and confused realization of the close connection or near-identity of reason, self, domination, and nature. He feels the gap between the ideals taught to him and the expectations that they arouse in him on the one hand, and the reality principle to which he is compelled to submit on the other. His ensuing rebellion is directed against the circumstance that the air of godliness, of aloofness from nature, of infinite superiority, conceals the rule of the stronger or of the smarter.

This discovery may add either one of two important elements to the character of the individual who makes it: resistance or submission. The resistant individual will oppose any pragmatic attempt to reconcile the demands of truth and the irrationalities of existence. Rather than to sacrifice truth by conforming to prevailing standards, he will insist on expressing in his life as much truth as he can, both in theory and in

practice. His will be a life of conflict; he must be ready to run the risk of utter loneliness. The irrational hostility that would incline him to project his inner difficulties upon the world is overcome by a passion to realize what his father represented in his childish imagination, namely, truth. This type of youth—if it is a type—takes seriously what he has been taught. He at least is successful in the process of internalization to the extent of turning against outside authority and the blind cult of so-called reality. He does not shrink from persistently confronting reality with truth, from unveiling the antagonism between ideals and actualities. His criticism itself, theoretical and practical, is a negative reassertion of the positive faith he had as a child.

The other element, submission, is the one the majority is driven to take on. Although most people never overcome the habit of berating the world for their difficulties, those who are too weak to make a stand against reality have no choice but to obliterate themselves by identifying with it. They are never rationally reconciled to civilization. Instead, they bow to it, secretly accepting the identity of reason and domination, of civilization and the ideal, however much they may shrug their shoulders. Well-informed cynicism is only another mode of conformity. These people willingly embrace or force themselves to accept the rule of the stronger as the eternal norm. Their whole life is a continuous effort to suppress and abase nature, inwardly or outwardly, and to identify themselves with its more powerful surrogates—the race, fatherland, leader, cliques, and tradition. For them, all these words mean the same thing—the irresistible reality that must be honored and obeyed. However, their own natural impulses, those antagonistic to the various demands of civilization, lead a devious undercover life within them. In psychoanalytic terms, one might say that the submissive individual is one whose unconscious has become fixed at the level of repressed rebellion against his real parents. This rebellion manifests itself in officious conformity or in crime, according to social or individual conditions. The resistant individual remains loyal to his superego, and in a sense to his father image. But a man's resistance to the world cannot be deduced simply from his unsolved conflict with his parents. On the contrary, only he is capable of resisting who has transcended this conflict. The real reason for his attitude is his realization that reality is 'untrue,' a realization he achieves by comparing his parents with the ideals that they claim to represent.

The change in the role of parents, through the increasing transfer of their educational functions to school and social groups as brought about

by modern economic life, accounts to a great extent for the gradual disappearance of individual resistance to prevailing social trends. However, in order to understand certain phenomena of mass psychology that have played a major role in recent history, a specific psychological mechanism deserves particular attention.

Modern writers tell us that the mimetic impulse of the child, his insistence on imitating everybody and everything, including his own feelings, is one of the means of learning, particularly in those early and all but unconscious stages of personal development that determine the individual's eventual character, his modes of reaction, his general behavior patterns. The whole body is an organ of mimetic expression. It is by way of this faculty that a human being acquires his special manner of laughing and crying, of speaking and judging. Only in the later phases of childhood is this unconscious imitation subordinated to conscious imitation and rational methods of learning. This explains why, for instance, the gestures, the intonations of voice, the degree and kind of irritability, the gait, in short, all the allegedly natural characteristics of a so-called race seem to persist by heredity long after the environmental causes for them have disappeared. The reactions and gestures of a successful Jewish businessman sometimes reflect the anxiety under which his ancestors lived; for an individual's mannerisms are less the fruit of rational education than atavistic vestiges due to mimetic tradition.

In the present crisis the problem of mimesis is particularly urgent. Civilization starts with, but must eventually transcend and transvaluate, man's native mimetic impulses. Cultural progress as a whole, as well as individual education, i.e. the phylogenetic and ontogenetic processes of civilization, consists largely in converting mimetic into rational attitudes. Just as primitives must learn that they can produce better crops by treating the soil properly than by practicing magic, so the modern child must learn to curb his mimetic impulses and to direct them toward a definite goal. Conscious adaptation and eventually domination replace the various forms of mimesis. The progress of science is the theoretical manifestation of this change: the formula supplants the image, the calculating machine the ritual dances. To adapt oneself means to make oneself like the world of objects for the sake of self-preservation. This deliberate (as opposed to reflexive) making of oneself like the environment is a universal principle of civilization.

Judaism and Christianity were efforts to give meaning to this mastering of primitive urges, to turn blind resignation into understanding and hope.

They achieved it by means of the messianic doctrine of the eternal soul and of personal beatitude. The European schools of philosophy tried to develop this religious heritage by means of critical reasoning, and even those of negative or atheistic trend kept these ideas alive by refusing to respect the fences of neutralized religion as a separate field. The great revolutions, the heirs of philosophy, transferred the absolute beliefs of the masses largely to the political realm. The nationalism of the modern era, however, has apparently not been able to inspire in the masses the vital faith that religion gave them. Although the French were willing to die for their fatherland and their emperor again and again, they found in his celebrated social reform too little hope to live on. The reinstatement of Catholicism by Napoleon indicates that the masses could not bear the painful repression of natural urges imposed upon them by his political and social program without the solace of the transcendental. Modern Russia inspires similar reflections.

If the final renunciation of the mimetic impulse does not promise to lead to the fulfilment of man's potentialities, this impulse will always lie in wait, ready to break out as a destructive force. That is, if there is no other norm than the *status quo*, if all the hope of happiness that reason can offer is that it preserves the existing as it is and even increases its pressure, the mimetic impulse is never really overcome. Men revert to it in a regressive and distorted form. Like the prudish censors of pornography, they abandon themselves to tabooed urges with hatred and contempt. Dominated masses readily identify themselves with the repressive agency. Indeed, in its service alone are they given free rein to indulge their imperious mimetic impulses, their need of expression. Their reaction to pressure is imitation—an implacable desire to persecute. This desire in turn is utilized to maintain the system that produces it. In this respect, modern man is not very different from his medieval forerunner, except in his choice of victims. Political outcasts, eccentric religious sects like the German *Bibelforscher*, and 'zoot-suiters' have taken the place of witches, sorcerers, and heretics; and there are still the Jews. Anyone who ever attended a National-Socialist meeting in Germany knows that speakers and audience got their chief thrill in acting out socially repressed mimetic drives, even if only in ridiculing and attacking racial enemies accused of impudently flaunting their own mimetic habits. The high spot of such a meeting was the moment when the speaker impersonated a Jew. He imitated those he would see destroyed. His impersonations aroused raucous hilarity, because a forbidden natural urge was permitted to assert itself without fear of reprimand.

No one has more ingeniously portrayed the deep anthropological affinity between hilarity, fury, and imitation than Victor Hugo in *L'Homme qui rit.* The scene in the British House of Lords in which laughter triumphs over truth is a masterful lecture on social psychology. The passage is entitled 'Human Storms Are More Malign than Storms of the Sea.' According to Hugo, laughter always contains an element of cruelty, and the laughter of crowds is the hilarity of madness. In our days of 'strength through joy' there are writers who leave those lords far behind. Max Eastman defends hilarity as a principle. Speaking of the concept of absolute, he declares: 'One of our chief virtues is that when we hear people say things like that ['the absolute'] we feel inclined to laugh. Laughter actually plays among us the role played in Germany by this same "absolute." ' In the eighteenth century, philosophy's laughter at big words sounded a rousing and courageous note that had an emancipating force. Such words were the symbols of actual tyranny; scoffing at them involved the risk of torture and death. In the twentieth century the object of laughter is not the conforming multitude but rather the eccentric who still ventures to think autonomously.* That this intellectual sidling up to anti-intellectualism expresses a literary tendency of today, is evidenced by Charles Beard's quoting Eastman's views with assent.† However, the tendency is far from being typical of the national spirit, as these authors seem to intimate. Opening the very first volume of Emerson, we find something that Eastman would call 'an intrusion from the "absolute" ': 'Whilst we behold unveiled the nature of Justice and Truth, we learn the difference between the absolute and the conditional or relative. We apprehend the absolute. As it were, for the first time, *we exist.*'‡ This motive remained a guiding idea of Emerson's whole work.

The spiteful use of the mimetic urge explains certain traits of modern demagogues. They are often described as ham actors. One might think of Goebbels. In appearance he was a caricature of the Jewish salesman whose liquidation he advocated. Mussolini reminded one of a provincial prima donna or a comic-opera corporal of the guard. Hitler's bag of tricks seems almost to have been stolen from Charlie Chaplin. His abrupt and

*On the different functions of skepticism in history, cf. Max Horkheimer, 'Montaigne und die Funktion der Skepsis' (English abstract, 'Montaigne and the Changing Role of Skepticism'), *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung,* VII, 1938, 1 ff.

† *The American Spirit,* New York, 1942, p. 664.

‡ Op. cit. 1, p. 57.

exaggerated gestures were reminiscent of Chaplin's caricatures of strong men in the early slapstick comedies. Modern demagogues usually behave like unruly boys, who normally are reprimanded or repressed by their parents, teachers, or some other civilizing agency. Their effect on an audience seems due partly to the fact that by acting out repressed urges they seem to be flying in the face of civilization and sponsoring the revolt of nature. But their protest is by no means genuine or naive. They never forget the purpose of their clowning. Their constant aim is to tempt nature to join the forces of repression by which nature itself is to be crushed.

Western civilization has never had a strong hold on the oppressed masses. Indeed, recent events demonstrate that when a crisis occurs, culture can count on few of its self-proclaimed devotees to stand out for its ideals. For one man who is able to differentiate between truth and reality, as the chief religions and philosophical systems have always done, there are thousands who have never been able to overcome the tendency to regress to their mimetic and other atavistic urges. This is not simply the fault of the masses: for the majority of mankind, civilization has meant the pressure to grow up to an adult state and responsibility, and still means poverty. Even rulers have not escaped the mutilating effects by which humanity pays for its technocratic triumphs. In other words, the overwhelming majority of people have no 'personality.' Appeals to their inner dignity or latent potentialities would arouse their distrust, and rightly so, because such words have become mere phrases by means of which they are supposedly kept in subservience. But their justified skepticism is accompanied by a deep-rooted tendency to treat their own 'inner nature' brutally and spitefully, to dominate it as they have been dominated by ruthless masters. When they give it rein, their actions are as warped and terrible as the excesses of slaves become tyrants. Power is the one thing they really respect and therefore seek to emulate.

This explains the tragic impotence of democratic arguments whenever they have had to compete with totalitarian methods. Under the Weimar Republic, for instance, the German people seemed loyal to the constitution and a democratic way of life as long as they believed that these were backed by real power. As soon as the ideals and principles of the Republic came into conflict with the interests of economic forces that represented a greater strength, the totalitarian agitators had an easy time of it. Hitler appealed to the unconscious in his audience by hinting that he could forge a power in whose name the ban on repressed nature would be lifted. Rational persuasion can never be as effective, because it is not congenial

to the repressed primitive urges of a superficially civilized people. Nor can democracy hope to emulate totalitarian propaganda, unless it undertakes to compromise the democratic way of life by stimulating destructive unconscious forces.

If the propaganda of the democratic nations had presented the recent world conflict chiefly as an issue between two races, rather than as involving mainly ideals and political interests, it might have been in many cases easier to evoke the most potent martial impulses in their citizenry. But the danger is that these very impulses may eventually prove fatal to Western civilization. On such occasions the term 'another race' assumes the meaning of 'a lower species than man and thus mere nature.' Some among the masses seize the opportunity to identify themselves with the official social ego and as such carry out with fury what the personal ego has been unable to achieve—the disciplining of nature, domination over instincts. They fight nature outside instead of inside themselves. The superego, impotent in its own house, becomes the hangman in society. These individuals obtain the gratification of feeling themselves as champions of civilization simultaneously with letting loose their repressed desires. Since their fury does not overcome their inner conflict, and since there are always plenty of others on whom to practice, this routine of suppression is repeated over and over again. Thus it tends toward total destruction.

The relation of National Socialism to the rebellion of nature was complex. Since such rebellion, though 'genuine,' always involves a regressive element, it is from the outset suitable for use as an instrument of reactionary ends. But today reactionary ends are accompanied by strict organization and ruthless rationalization, by 'progress' in a certain sense. Hence the 'natural' revolt was no more spontaneous than the Nazi pogroms that at a given moment were ordered or called off from above. Though the ruling cliques were not exclusively responsible for the occurrences, since a great part of the population condoned even when it did not actively participate in them, these atrocities, however 'natural,' were switched on and directed according to a highly rational plan. In modern fascism, rationality has reached a point at which it is no longer satisfied with simply repressing nature; rationality now exploits nature by incorporating into its own system the rebellious potentialities of nature. The Nazis manipulated the suppressed desires of the German people. When the Nazis and their industrial and military backers launched their movement, they had to enlist the masses, whose material interests were not theirs. They appealed to the backward strata doomed by industrial development,

that is, squeezed out by the techniques of mass production. Here, among the peasants, middle-class artisans, retailers, housewives, and small manufacturers, were to be found the protagonists of repressed nature, the victims of instrumentalized reason. Without the active support of these groups, the Nazis could never have gained power.

Repressed natural drives were harnessed to the needs of Nazi rationalism. And their very assertion led to their denial. The small producers and merchants who rallied to the Nazis lost all remnants of independence and were reduced to functionaries of the regime. Not only was their specific psychological 'nature' abolished, but in the process of their being rationally co-ordinated their material interests suffered; their standard of living was lowered. In the same way, the rebellion against institutionalized law changed into lawlessness and release of brute force in the service of the powers that be. The moral is plain: the apotheosis of the ego and the principle of self-preservation as such culminate in the utter insecurity of the individual, in his complete negation. Clearly, the Nazi rebellion of nature against civilization was more than an ideological façade. Individuality cracked under the impact of the Nazi system, yielding something that is close to the atomized, anarchic human being—what Spengler once called the 'new raw man.' The revolt of natural man—in the sense of the backward strata of the population—against the growth of rationality has actually furthered the formalization of reason, and has served to fetter rather than to free nature. In this light, we might describe fascism as a satanic synthesis of reason and nature—the very opposite of that reconciliation of the two poles that philosophy has always dreamed of.

Such is the pattern of every so-called revolt of nature throughout history. Whenever nature is exalted as a supreme principle and becomes the weapon of thought against thinking, against civilization, thought manifests a kind of hypocrisy, and so develops an uneasy conscience. For it has largely accepted the very principle that it is ostensibly combating. In this respect, there is little difference between the eulogies of a Roman court poet regarding the virtues of rustic life and the prating of German heavy industrialists about blood and soil and the blessing of a nation of healthy peasants. Both serve imperialist propaganda. Indeed, the Nazi regime as a revolt of nature became a lie the moment it became conscious of itself as a revolt. The lackey of the very mechanized civilization that it professed to reject, it took over the inherently repressive measures of the latter.

In America the problem of the revolt of nature is essentially different from that in Europe, because in this country the tradition of a

metaphysical speculation that regards nature as a mere product of the spirit is far weaker than it is on the older continent. But the tendency to real domination of nature is equally strong, and for that reason the structure of American thinking also reveals the fatal intimate connection between domination of nature and revolt of nature. This connection is perhaps most striking in Darwinism, which has possibly influenced American thinking more than any other single intellectual force except the theological heritage. Pragmatism owed its inspiration to the theory of evolution and adaptation, as derived either directly from Darwin or through some philosophical intermediary, particularly Spencer.

Because of its inherent humility toward nature, Darwinism could help in the task reconciling it with man. Whenever this theory encourages the spirit of humility, and it has done so on many occasions, it is definitely superior to opposite doctrines and corresponds to the element of resistance discussed above in relation to the ego. However, popular Darwinism, which permeates many aspects of the mass culture and public ethos of our time, does not exhibit this humility. The doctrine of 'survival of the fittest' is no longer a theory of organic evolution making no pretense of imposing ethical imperatives upon society. No matter how expressed, the idea has become the prime axiom of conduct and ethics.

To have Darwinism counted among the philosophies that reflect the revolt of nature against reason may be surprising, as this revolt is usually associated with romanticism, sentimental discontent with civilization, and the desire to recall primitive stages of society or human nature. Darwin's doctrine is certainly devoid of such sentimentality. Not at all romantic, it belongs to the main growth of Enlightenment. Darwin broke with a fundamental dogma of Christianity—that God created man in his own image. At the same time he struck at metaphysical concepts of evolution, as they had prevailed from Aristotle to Hegel. He conceived of evolution as a blind sequence of events, in which survival depends upon adaptation to the conditions of life, rather than as the unfolding of organic entities in accordance with their entelechies.

Darwin was essentially a physical scientist, not a philosopher. Despite his own personal religious feeling, the philosophy underlying his ideas was plainly positivist. Thus his name has come to represent the idea of man's domination of nature in terms of common sense. One may even go so far as to say that the concept of the survival of the fittest is merely the translation of the concepts of formalized reason into the vernacular of natural history. In popular Darwinism, reason is purely an organ; spirit

or mind, a thing of nature. According to a current interpretation of Darwin, the struggle for life must necessarily, step by step, through natural selection, produce the reasonable out of the unreasonable. In other words, reason, while serving the function of dominating nature, is whittled down to being a part of nature; it is not an independent faculty but something organic, like tentacles or hands, developed through adaptation to natural conditions and surviving because it proves to be an adequate means of mastering them, especially in relation to acquiring food and averting danger. As a part of nature, reason is at the same time set against nature—the competitor and enemy of all life that is not its own.

The idea inherent in all idealistic metaphysics—that the world is in some sense a product of the mind—is thus turned into its opposite: the mind is a product of the world, of the processes of nature. Hence, according to popular Darwinism, nature does not need philosophy to speak for her: nature, a powerful and venerable deity, is ruler rather than ruled. Darwinism comes ultimately to the aid of rebellious nature in undermining any doctrine, theological or philosophical, that regards nature itself as expressing a truth that reason must try to recognize. The equating of reason and nature, by which reason is debased and raw nature exalted, is a typical fallacy of the era of rationalization. Instrumentalized subjective reason either eulogizes nature as pure vitality or disparages it as brute force, instead of treating it as a text to be interpreted by philosophy that, if rightly read, will unfold a tale of infinite suffering. Without committing the fallacy of equating nature and reason, mankind must try to reconcile the two.

In traditional theology and metaphysics, the natural was largely conceived as the evil, and the spiritual or supernatural as the good. In popular Darwinism, the good is the well-adapted, and the value of that to which the organism adapts itself is unquestioned or is measured only in terms of further adaptation. However, being well adapted to one's surroundings is tantamount to being capable of coping successfully with them, of mastering the forces that beset one. Thus the theoretical denial of the spirit's antagonism to nature—even as implied in the doctrine of interrelation between the various forms of organic life, including man—frequently amounts in practice to subscribing to the principle of man's continuous and thoroughgoing domination of nature. Regarding reason as a natural organ does not divest it of the trend to domination or invest it with greater potentialities for reconciliation. On the contrary, the

abdication of the spirit in popular Darwinism entails the rejection of any elements of the mind that transcend the function of adaptation and consequently are not instruments of self-preservation. Reason disavows its own primacy and professes to be a mere servant of natural selection. On the surface, this new empirical reason seems more humble toward nature than the reason of the metaphysical tradition. Actually, however, it is arrogant, practical mind riding roughshod over the 'useless spiritual,' and dismissing any view of nature in which the latter is taken to be more than a stimulus to human activity. The effects of this view are not confined to modern philosophy.

The doctrines that exalt nature or primitivism at the expense of spirit do not favor reconciliation with nature; on the contrary, they emphasize coldness and blindness toward nature. Whenever man deliberately makes nature his principle, he regresses to primitive urges. Children are cruel in mimetic reactions, because they do not really understand the plight of nature. Almost like animals, they often treat one another coldly and carelessly, and we know that even gregarious animals are isolated when they are together. Obviously, individual isolation is much more marked among nongregarious animals and in groups of animals of different species. All this, however, seems to a certain extent innocent. Animals, and in a way even children, do not reason. The philosopher's and politician's abdication of reason by a surrender to reality extenuates a much worse form of regression and inevitably culminates in a confusing of philosophical truth with ruthless self-preservation and war.

In summary, we are the heirs, for better or worse, of the Enlightenment and technological progress. To oppose these by regressing to more primitive stages does not alleviate the permanent crisis they have brought about. On the contrary, such expedients lead from historically reasonable to utterly barbaric forms of social domination. The sole way of assisting nature is to unshackle its seeming opposite, independent thought.

IV

Rise and Decline of the Individual

The crisis of reason is manifested in the crisis of the individual, as whose agency it has developed. The illusion that traditional philosophy has cherished about the individual and about reason—the illusion of their eternity—is being dispelled. The individual once conceived of reason exclusively as an instrument of the self. Now he experiences the reverse of this self-deification. The machine has dropped the driver; it is racing blindly into space. At the moment of consummation, reason has become irrational and stultified. The theme of this time is self-preservation, while there is no self to preserve. In view of this situation, it behooves us to reflect upon the concept of the individual.

When we speak of the individual as a historical entity, we mean not merely the space-time and the sense existence of a particular member of the human race, but, in addition, his awareness of his own individuality as a conscious human being, including recognition of his own identity. This perception of the identity of the self is not equally strong in all persons. It is more clearly defined in adults than in children, who must learn to call themselves 'I'—the most elementary affirmation of identity. It is likewise weaker among primitive than among civilized men; indeed, the aborigine who has only recently been exposed to the dynamic of Western civilization often seems very uncertain of his identity. Living in the gratifications and frustrations of the moment, he seems but dimly aware that as an individual he must go on to face the hazards of tomorrow. This lag, it need hardly be said, partly accounts for the common belief that these people are lazy or that they are liars—a reproach that presupposes in the accused the very sense of identity they lack. The qualities found in extreme form

among oppressed peoples, such as the Negroes, are also manifested, as a tendency, in persons of oppressed social classes that lack the economic fundament of inherited property. Thus, stunted individuality is found also among the poor white population of the American South. If these submerged people were not conditioned to imitation of their superiors, blatant advertising or educational appeals exhorting them to cultivation of personality would inevitably seem to them condescending, not to say hypocritical—an effort to lull them into a state of delusional contentment.

Individuality presupposes the voluntary sacrifice of immediate satisfaction for the sake of security, material and spiritual maintenance of one's own existence. When the roads to such a life are blocked, one has little incentive to deny oneself momentary pleasures. Hence, individuality among the masses is far less integrated and enduring than among the so-called elite. On the other hand, the elite have always been more preoccupied with the strategies of gaining and holding power. Social power is today more than ever mediated by power over things. The more intense an individual's concern with power over things, the more will things dominate him, the more will he lack any genuine individual traits, and the more will his mind be transformed into an automaton of formalized reason.

The story of the individual, even in ancient Greece, which not only created the concept of individuality but set the patterns for Western culture, is still largely unwritten. The model of the emerging individual is the Greek hero. Daring and self-reliant, he triumphs in the struggle for survival and emancipates himself from tradition as well as from the tribe. To historians like Jacob Burckhardt, such a hero is the incarnation of an unbridled and naive egoism. Nevertheless, while his boundless ego radiates the spirit of domination and intensifies the antagonism of the individual to the community and its mores, he remains unclear about the nature of the conflict between his ego and the world, and hence repeatedly falls prey to all kinds of intrigue. His awe-inspiring deeds do not spring from some personally motivated trait, such as malice or cruelty, but rather from a desire to avenge a crime or ward off a curse. The concept of heroism is inseparable from that of sacrifice. The tragic hero originates in the conflict between the tribe and its members, a conflict in which the individual is always defeated. One may say that the life of the hero is not so much a manifestation of individuality as a prelude to its birth, through the marriage of self-preservation and self-sacrifice. The only one

of Homer's heroes who strikes us as having individuality, a mind of his own, is Ulysses, and he is too wily to seem truly heroic.

The typical Greek individual came to flower in the age of the polis, or city-state, with the crystallization of a burgher class. In Athenian ideology the state was both superior and antecedent to its citizens. But this predominance of the polis facilitated rather than hindered the rise of the individual: it effected a balance between the state and its members, between individual freedom and communal welfare, as nowhere more eloquently depicted than in the Funeral Oration of Pericles. In a famous passage of the *Politics*,* Aristotle describes the Greek burgher as a type of individual who, in possessing both the courage of the European and the intelligence of the Asiatic, that is, combining the capacity for self-preservation with reflection, acquired the ability to dominate others without losing his freedom. The Hellenic race, he says, 'if it could be formed into one state, would be able to rule the world.'† Time and again when urban culture was at its peak, for instance in Florence during the fifteenth century, a similar balance of psychological forces was achieved. The fortunes of the individual have always been bound up with the development of urban society. The city dweller is the individual *par excellence*. The great individualists who were critical of city life, such as Rousseau and Tolstoi, had their intellectual roots in urban traditions; Thoreau's escape to the woods was conceived by a student of the Greek polis rather than by a peasant. In these men the individualistic dread of civilization was nourished by its fruits. The antagonism between individuality and the economic and social conditions of its existence, as expressed by these authors, is an essential element in individuality itself. Today, this antagonism is supplanted in the conscious minds of individuals by the desire to adapt themselves to reality. This process is symptomatic of the present crisis of the individual, which in turn reflects the breakdown of the traditional idea of the city that has prevailed in occidental history for twenty-five centuries.

Plato made the first systematic attempt to forge a philosophy of individuality in accordance with the ideals of the polis. He conceived of man and the state as harmonious and interdependent structures of intelligence, desire, and courage, best organized when the division of

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* *Politica*, VII, 7, 1327 b.

† Transl. by Benjamin Jowett, in *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. by W. D. Ross, Oxford, 1921, v. x.

labor corresponded to the respective aspects of the tripartite psyche of man. His *Republic* projects an equilibrium between individual liberty and group control in the interests of the community. At every turn Plato tries to show the harmony within the practical and the theoretical realm, and between the two. In the practical realm, harmony is achieved by assigning to each estate its function and its rights, and by correlating the structure of society with the nature of its members. In the theoretical realm, it is achieved through a system that gives adequate scope to each 'form' in the universal hierarchy and assures the 'participation' of each individual in the ideal archetypes. Since this great chain of being is eternal, the individual is predetermined. The value of each being is assessed in the light of a pre-existing teleology.

Much in Plato's ontology savors of archaic cosmogonies in which all life and existence are ruled by irresistible and inflexible forces; it is as senseless for a man to resist fate as it is for any other organism in nature to resist the rhythm of the seasons or the cycle of life and death. In admiring the sweeping vistas of the Platonic universe, we must not forget that they stem from and presuppose a society based upon slave labor. On the one hand Plato points the way to individualism, when he postulates that man makes himself, at least to this extent, that he fulfils his innate potentialities. On the other hand, Aristotle did not deviate from Plato's doctrine when he taught that some are born slaves and others free, and that the virtue of the slave, like that of women and children, consists in obedience. According to this philosophy, only free men can aspire to the kind of harmony that comes from competition and agreement.

Inherent in Plato's system is the idea of objective rather than subjective or formalized reason. This orientation helps to explain its concreteness and at the same time its distance from human nature. An element of coldness is to be found in many celebrated ontologies that emphasize the value of harmonious personality—even in the seemingly mild serenity of Goethe, not to speak of the vision of the harmonious cosmos in medieval philosophy. The personality is the microcosm corresponding to an immutable social and natural hierarchy. Insistence upon any immutable order of the universe, implying the static view of history, precludes hope of a progressive emancipation of the subject from eternal childhood in both community and nature. The transition from objective to subjective reason was a necessary historical process.

It must be noted, however, even if only briefly, that the concept of progress is no less problematical and cold. If the ontologies hypostatize the

forces of nature indirectly by means of objectivized concepts, and thus favor man's domination of nature, the doctrine of progress directly hypostatizes the ideal of the domination of nature and finally itself degenerates into a static, derivative mythology. Motion as such, abstracted from its social context and its human goal, becomes merely an illusion of motion, the bad infinity of mechanical repetition. The elevation of progress to the status of a supreme ideal disregards the contradictory character of any progress, even that in a dynamic society. It is not accident that in the basic text of Western philosophy, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the idea of universal dynamism could be directly related to an immovable First Mover. The circumstance that the blind development of technology strengthens social oppression and exploitation threatens at every stage to transform progress into its opposite, complete barbarism. Both static ontology and the doctrine of progress—both objectivistic and subjectivistic forms of philosophy—forget man.

Socrates—who is less formal, more 'negative' than his disciples, Plato and Aristotle—was the true herald of the abstract idea of individuality, the first to affirm explicitly the autonomy of the individual. Socrates' affirmation of conscience raised the relation between the individual and the universal to a new level. The balance was no longer inferred from the established harmony within the polis; on the contrary, the universal was now conceived as an inner, almost self-authenticating truth, lodged in man's spirit. For Socrates, following in the line of the speculations of the great Sophists, to desire or even to do the right thing without reflection was not enough. Conscious choice was a prerequisite of the ethical way of life. Thus he clashed with the Athenian judges, who represented hallowed custom and cult. His trial* seems to mark the point in cultural history at which the individual conscience and the state, the ideal and the real, begin to be separated as by a gulf. The subject begins to think of himself—as opposed to outward reality—as the highest of all ideas. Gradually, as his importance in the ancient world continued to wax, interest in the existent waned. More and more, philosophy tended to take on the character of a quest for consolation through inner harmonies. Hellenistic society is permeated with post-Socratic philosophies of resignation, such as the Stoa, that assure man that his highest good lies in self-sufficiency (autarchy), attainable by desiring nothing, not by possessing everything essential to an independent life. Such counsel of apathy and avoidance of

* Cf. analysis of the trial of Socrates in Hegel's *History of Philosophy.*

pain led to dissociating the individual from the community, and the concomitant dissociation of the ideal from the real. In relinquishing his prerogative of shaping reality in the image of truth, the individual submits himself to tyranny.

There is a moral in all this: individuality is impaired when each man decides to shift for himself. As the ordinary man withdraws from participation in political affairs, society tends to revert to the law of the jungle, which crushes all vestiges of individuality. The absolutely isolated individual has always been an illusion. The most esteemed personal qualities, such as independence, will to freedom, sympathy, and the sense of justice, are social as well as individual virtues. The fully developed individual is the consummation of a fully developed society. The emancipation of the individual is not an emancipation from society, but the deliverance of society from atomization, an atomization that may reach its peak in periods of collectivization and mass culture.

The Christian individual emerged from the ruins of Hellenistic society. It might be thought that in the face of an infinite and transcendent God, the Christian individual is infinitely small and helpless—that he is a contradiction in terms, since the price of eternal salvation is complete self-renunciation. In actual fact, the aspiration to individuality was strengthened immeasurably by the doctrine that life on earth is a mere interlude in the eternal story of the soul. The value of the soul was enhanced by the idea of equality implied in God's creation of man in his own image and in Christ's atonement for all mankind. The very concept of the soul as the inner light, the dwelling place of God, came into being only with Christianity, and all antiquity has an element of emptiness and aloofness by contrast. Some of the Gospel teachings and stories about the simple fishermen and carpenters of Galilee seem to make Greek masterpieces mute and soulless—lacking that very 'inner light'—and the leading figures of antiquity roughhewn and barbaric.

In Christianity the human ego and finite nature are not at odds as they were in rigorous Hebraic monotheism. Because Christ is the mediator between infinite truth and finite human existence, traditional Augustinianism, which exalts the soul and condemns nature, ultimately lost to Thomistic Aristotelianism, which is a grand design for reconciling the ideal and the empirical worlds. Christianity, in sharp contrast with competing world religions and Hellenistic ethical philosophies, associates renunciation, the mastering of natural drives, with universal love, which suffuses every act. The idea of self-preservation is transformed into a

metaphysical principle that guarantees the eternal life of the soul; by the very devaluation of his empirical ego, the individual acquires a new depth and complexity.

Just as the mind is nothing but an element of nature so long as it perseveres in its opposition to nature, so the individual is nothing but a biological specimen so long as he is merely the incarnation of an ego defined by the co-ordination of his functions in the service of self-preservation. Man emerged as an individual when society began to lose its cohesiveness and he became aware of the difference between his life and that of the seemingly eternal collectivity. Death took on a stark and implacable aspect, and the life of the individual became an irreplaceable absolute value. Hamlet, often called the first truly modern individual, is the embodiment of the idea of individuality for the very reason that he fears the finality of death, the terror of the abyss. The profundity of his metaphysical reflections, the subtle shadings of his mind, presuppose the conditioning of Christianity. Although Hamlet, a good disciple of Montaigne, lost his Christian faith, he retained his Christian soul, and in a way this marks the actual origin of the modern individual. Christianism created the principle of individuality through its doctrine of the immortal soul, an image of God. But at the same time Christianism relativized the concrete mortal individuality. Renaissance humanism preserves the infinite value of the individual as conceived by Christianism but absolutizes it, thus fully crystallizing it but also preparing its destruction. To Hamlet, the individual is both the absolute entity and completely futile.

By the very negation of the will to self-preservation on earth in favor of the preservation of the eternal soul, Christianity asserted the infinite value of each man, an idea that penetrated even non-Christian or anti-Christian systems of the Western world. True, the price was the repression of vital instincts, and—since such repression is never successful—an insincerity that pervades our culture. Nevertheless, this very internalization enhances individuality. By negating himself, by imitating Christ's sacrifice, the individual simultaneously acquires a new dimension and a new ideal on which to pattern his life on earth.

It could be shown that the Christian doctrine of love, of *caritas*, which was at first welcomed by those in power, later gained a momentum of its own, and that the Christian soul finally came to resist the very agency that had nourished it and propagated the idea of its supremacy, namely, the Church. The Church extended its sway over the inner life, a sphere not invaded by social institutions of classical antiquity. By the end of the

Middle Ages, church controls, both temporal and spiritual, were increasingly evaded. There is a striking parallelism between the Reformation and the philosophical Enlightenment with respect to the idea of the individual.

In the era of free enterprise, the so-called era of individualism, individuality was most completely subordinated to self-preserving reason. In that era, the idea of individuality seemed to shake itself loose from metaphysical trappings and to become merely a synthesis of the individual's material interests. That it was not thereby saved from being used as a pawn by ideologists needs no proof. Individualism is the very heart of the theory and practice of bourgeois liberalism, which sees society as progressing through the automatic interaction of divergent interests in a free market. The individual could maintain himself as a social being only by pursuing his own long-term interests at the expense of ephemeral immediate gratifications. The qualities of individuality forged by the ascetic discipline of Christianity were thereby reinforced. The bourgeois individual did not necessarily see himself as opposed to the collectivity, but believed or was prevailed upon to believe himself to be a member of a society that could achieve the highest degree of harmony only through the unrestricted competition of individual interests.

Liberalism may be said to have considered itself the sponsor of a utopia that had come true, needing little more than the smoothing out of a few troublesome wrinkles. These wrinkles were not to be blamed on the liberalistic principle, but on the regrettable nonliberalistic obstacles that impeded its complete fruition. The principle of liberalism has led to conformity through the leveling principle of commerce and exchange which held liberalistic society together. The monad, a seventeenth-century symbol of the atomistic economic individual of bourgeois society, became a social type. All the monads, isolated though they were by moats of self-interest, nevertheless tended to become more and more alike through the pursuit of this very self-interest. In our era of large economic combines and mass culture, the principle of conformity emancipates itself from its individualistic veil, is openly proclaimed, and raised to the rank of an ideal *per se*.

Liberalism at its dawn was characterized by the existence of a multitude of independent entrepreneurs, who took care of their own property and defended it against antagonistic social forces. The movements of the market and the general trend of production were rooted in the economic requirements of their enterprises. Merchant and manufacturer alike had

to be prepared for all economic and political eventualities. This need stimulated them to learn what they could from the past and to formulate plans for the future. They had to think for themselves, and although the much-vaunted independence of their thinking was to a certain extent nothing more than an illusion, it had enough objectivity to serve the interests of society in a given form and at a given period. The society of middle-class proprietors, particularly those who acted as middlemen in trade and certain types of manufacturers, had to encourage independent thinking, even though it might be at variance with their particular interests. The enterprise itself, which, it was assumed, would be handed down in the family, gave a businessman's deliberations a horizon that extended far beyond his own life span. His individuality was that of a provider, proud of himself and his kind, convinced that community and state rested upon himself and others like him, all professedly animated by the incentive of material gain. His sense of adequacy to the challenges of an acquisitive world expressed itself in his strong yet sober ego, maintaining interests that transcended his immediate needs.

In this age of big business, the independent entrepreneur is no longer typical. The ordinary man finds it harder and harder to plan for his heirs or even for his own remote future. The contemporary individual may have more opportunities than his ancestors had, but his concrete prospects have an increasingly shorter term. The future does not enter as precisely into his transactions. He simply feels that he will not be entirely lost if he preserves his skill and clings to his corporation, association, or union. Thus the individual subject of reason tends to become a shrunken ego, captive of an evanescent present, forgetting the use of the intellectual functions by which he was once able to transcend his actual position in reality. These functions are now taken over by the great economic and social forces of the era. The future of the individual depends less and less upon his own prudence and more and more upon the national and international struggles among the colossi of power. Individuality loses its economic basis.

There are still some forces of resistance left within man. It is evidence against social pessimism that despite the continuous assault of collective patterns, the spirit of humanity is still alive, if not in the individual as a member of social groups, at least in the individual as far as he is let alone. But the impact of the existing conditions upon the average man's life is such that the submissive type mentioned earlier has become overwhelmingly predominant. From the day of his birth, the individual is

made to feel that there is only one way of getting along in this world—that of giving up his hope of ultimate self-realization. This he can achieve solely by imitation. He continuously responds to what he perceives about him, not only consciously but with his whole being, emulating the traits and attitudes represented by all the collectivities that enmesh him—his play group, his classmates, his athletic team, and all the other groups that, as has been pointed out, enforce a more strict conformity, a more radical surrender through complete assimilation, than any father or teacher in the nineteenth century could impose. By echoing, repeating, imitating his surroundings, by adapting himself to all the powerful groups to which he eventually belongs, by transforming himself from a human being into a member of organizations, by sacrificing his potentialities for the sake of readiness and ability to conform to and gain influence in such organizations, he manages to survive. It is survival achieved by the oldest biological means of survival, namely, mimicry.

Just as a child repeats the words of his mother, and the youngster the brutal manners of the elders at whose hands he suffers, so the giant loud-speaker of industrial culture, blaring through commercialized recreation and popular advertising—which become more and more indistinguishable from each other—endlessly reduplicates the surface of reality. All the ingenious devices of the amusement industry reproduce over and over again banal life scenes that are deceptive nevertheless, because the technical exactness of the reproduction veils the falsification of the ideological content or the arbitrariness of the introduction of such content. This reproduction has nothing in common with great realistic art, which portrays reality in order to judge it. Modern mass culture, although drawing freely upon stale cultural values, glorifies the world as it is. Motion pictures, the radio, popular biographies and novels have the same refrain: This is our groove, this is the rut of the great and the would-be great—this is reality as it is and should be and will be.

Even the words that could voice a hope for something besides the fruits of success have been pressed into this service. The idea of eternal bliss and everything relating to the absolute have been reduced to the function of religious edification, conceived as a leisure-time activity; they have been made part of the Sunday-school vernacular. The idea of happiness has similarly been reduced to a banality to coincide with leading the kind of normal life that serious religious thought has often criticized. The very idea of truth has been reduced to the purpose of a useful tool in the

control of nature, and the realization of the infinite potentialities inherent in man has been relegated to the status of a luxury. Thought that does not serve the interests of any established group or is not pertinent to the business of any industry has no place, is considered vain or superfluous. Paradoxically, a society that, in the face of starvation in great areas of the world, allows a large part of its machinery to stand idle, that shelves many important inventions, and that devotes innumerable working hours to moronic advertising and to the production of instruments of destruction—a society in which these luxuries are inherent has made usefulness its gospel.

Because modern society is a totality, the decline of individuality affects the lower as well as the higher social groups, the worker no less than the businessman. One of the most important attributes of individuality, that of spontaneous action, which began to decline in capitalism as a result of the partial elimination of competition, played an integral part in socialist theory. But today the spontaneity of the working class has been impaired by the general dissolution of individuality. Labor is increasingly divorced from critical theories as they were formulated by the great political and social thinkers of the nineteenth century. Influential labor leaders who are known as champions of progress attribute the victory of fascism in Germany to the emphasis laid upon theoretical thinking by the German working class. As a matter of fact not theory but its decline furthers surrender to the powers that be, whether they are represented by the controlling agencies of capital or those of labor. However, the masses, despite their pliability, have not capitulated completely to collectivization. Although, under the pressure of the pragmatic reality of today, man's self-expression has become identical with his function in the prevailing system, although he desperately represses any other impulse within himself as well as in others, the rage that seizes him whenever he becomes aware of an unintegrated longing that does not fit into the existing pattern is a sign of his smoldering resentment. This resentment, if repression were abolished, would be turned against the whole social order, which has an intrinsic tendency to prevent its members from gaining insight into the mechanisms of their own repression. Throughout history, physical, organizational, and cultural pressures have always had their role in the integration of the individual into a just or unjust order; today, the labor organizations, in their very effort to improve the status of labor, are inevitably led to contribute to that pressure.

There is a crucial difference between the social units of the modern industrial era and those of earlier epochs. The units of the older societies were totalities, in the sense that they had grown into hierarchically organized entities. The life of the totemistic tribe, the clan, the church of the Middle Ages, the nation in the era of the bourgeois revolutions, followed ideological patterns shaped through historical developments. Such patterns—magical, religious, or philosophical—reflected current forms of social domination. They constituted a cultural cement even after their role in production had become obsolete; thus they also fostered the idea of a common truth. This they did by the very fact that they had become objectified. Any system of ideas, religious, artistic, or logical, so far as it is articulated in meaningful language, attains a general connotation and necessarily claims to be true in a universal sense.

The objective and universal validity claimed for the ideologies of the older collective units constituted an essential condition of their existence in the body of society. But the patterns of organization, such as that of the medieval Church, did not point for point coincide with the forms of material life. Only the hierarchical structure and the ritual functions of both clergy and laity were strictly regulated. Apart from that, neither life itself nor its intellectual framework was completely integrated. The basic spiritual concepts were not entirely amalgamated with pragmatic considerations; thus they maintained a certain autonomous character. There was still a cleavage between culture and production. This cleavage left more loopholes than modern superorganization, which virtually reduces the individual to a mere cell of functional response. Modern organizational units, such as the totality of labor, are organic parts of the socio-economic system.

The earlier totalities, which were supposed to conform to an abstract spiritual model, contained an element that is lacking in the purely pragmatistic totalities of industrialism. The latter likewise have a hierarchical structure; but they are thoroughly and despotically integrated. For example, promotion of their functionaries to higher ranks is not based on qualifications related to any spiritual ideals. Almost exclusively it is a matter of their ability to manipulate people; here purely administrative and technical skills determine the selection of governing personnel. Such capacities were by no means lacking in the hierarchical leadership of former societies; but the dissolution of relation between leadership capacities and an objectivized framework of spiritual ideals is what gives the modern totalities their distinctive character. The modern Church

represents a carry-over of the older forms; this survival rests, however, on extensive adaptation to the purely mechanical conception—which, incidentally, the inherent pragmatism of Christian theology has helped to propagate.

Social theory—reactionary, democratic, or revolutionary—was the heir to the older systems of thought that were supposed to have set the patterns for past totalities. These older systems had vanished because the forms of solidarity postulated by them proved to be deceptive, and the ideologies related to them became hollow and apologetic. The latter-day critique of society for its part refrained from apologetics, and did not glorify its subject—not even Marx exalted the proletariat. He looked upon capitalism as the last form of social injustice; he did not condone the established ideas and superstitions of the dominated class whom his doctrine was supposed to guide. In contrast to the tendencies of mass culture, none of those doctrines undertook to 'sell' the people the way of life in which they are fixed and which they unconsciously abhor but overtly acclaim. Social theory offered a critical analysis of reality, including the workers' own warped thoughts. Under the conditions of modern industrialism, however, even political theory is infected with the apologetic trend of the total culture.

This is not to say that a return to the older forms should be desired. The clock cannot be put back, nor can organizational development be reversed or even theoretically rejected. The task of the masses today consists not in clinging to traditional party patterns, but rather in recognizing and resisting the monopolistic pattern that is infiltrating their own organizations and infesting their minds individually. In the nineteenth-century concept of a rational society of the future, the emphasis was on planning, organizing, and centralizing mechanisms rather than on the plight of the individual. The parliamentary workers' parties, themselves a product of liberalism, denounced liberalistic irrationality and promoted a planned socialist economy in opposition to anarchic capitalism. They promoted social organization and centralization as postulates of reason in an age of unreason. Under the present form of industrialism, however, the other side of rationality has become manifest through the increasing suppression of it—the role of nonconforming critical thought in the shaping of social life, of the spontaneity of the individual subject, of his opposition to ready-made patterns of behavior. On the one hand, the world is still divided into hostile groups and economic and political blocks. This situation calls for organization and centralization, which represent

the element of the general from the standpoint of reason. On the other hand, the human being is from his early childhood so thoroughly incorporated into associations, teams, and organizations that specificity (uniqueness), the element of particularity from the standpoint of reason, is completely repressed or absorbed. This applies to the worker as well as the entrepreneur. In the nineteenth century the proletariat was still fairly amorphous. This was why, despite its being split into national groups, skilled and unskilled labor, employed and unemployed, its interests could be crystallized in terms of common economic and social concepts. The amorphousness of the working population and its concomitant tendency to theoretical thinking formed a contrast to the pragmatic totalities of business leadership. The rise of the workers from a passive to an active role in the capitalistic process has been achieved at the price of integration in the general system.

The same process that, both in reality and in ideology, has made labor an economic subject has transformed the laborer, who was already the object of industry, into the object of labor as well. As ideology has become more realistic, more down-to-earth, its inherent contradiction to reality, its absurdity, has increased. While the masses think of themselves as the creators of their own destiny, they are the objects of their leaders. Of course, anything that labor leaders achieve secures some advantages to the workers, at least temporarily. Neo-liberals who oppose unionism are indulging in an obsolete romanticism, and their incursion into economics is more dangerous than their activities in the philosophical sphere. The fact that labor unions are monopolistically organized does not mean that their members—aside from labor aristocracy—are monopolists. It does mean that the leaders control labor supply, as the heads of great corporations control raw materials, machines, or other elements of production. Labor leaders manage labor, manipulate it, advertise it, and try to fix its price as high as possible. At the same time their own social and economic power, their positions and incomes, all vastly superior to the power, position, and income of the individual worker, depend upon the industrialist system.

The fact that organizing labor is recognized as a business, like that of any other corporate enterprise, completes the process of the reification of man. A worker's productive power today is not only bought by the factory and subordinated to the requirements of technology, but is apportioned and managed by the leadership of the labor unions.

As religious and moral ideologies fade, and political theory is abolished

by the march of economic and political events,* the ideas of the workers tend to be molded by the business ideology of their leaders. The idea of an intrinsic conflict between the laboring masses of the world and the existence of social injustice is superseded by the concepts relating to the strategy of conflicts between the several power groups. It is true that workers of earlier days did not have any conceptual knowledge of the mechanisms unveiled by social theory, and their minds and bodies bore the marks of oppression; yet their misery was still the misery of individual human beings, and therefore linked them with any miserable people in any country and in any sector of society. Their undeveloped minds were not continually being prodded by the techniques of mass culture that hammer the industrialistic behavior patterns into their eyes and ears and muscles during their leisure time as well as during working hours. Workers today, no less than the rest of the population, are intellectually better trained, better informed, and much less naive. They know the details of national affairs and the chicanery of political movements, particularly of those that live by propaganda against corruption. The workers, at least those who have not gone through the hell of fascism, will join in any persecution of a capitalist or politician who has been singled out because he has violated the rules of the game; but they do not question the rules in themselves. They have learned to take social injustice—even inequity within their own group—as a powerful fact, and to take powerful facts as the only things to be respected. Their minds are closed to dreams of a basically different world and to concepts that, instead of being mere classification of facts, are oriented toward real fulfilment of those dreams. Modern economic conditions make for a positivistic attitude in

*The decline of theory and its replacement by empirical research in a positivistic sense is reflected not only in political thought but also in academic sociology. The concept of class in its universal aspect played an essential role in American sociology when it was young. Later, emphasis was laid upon investigations in the light of which such a concept appears increasingly metaphysical. Theoretical concepts, which could link sociological theory with philosophical thinking, have been replaced by signs for groups of conventionally conceived facts. The basis of this development is to be sought in the social process here described rather than in the progress of sociological science. The period in which sociology believed in its 'larger task of constructing theoretical systems of social structure and social change,' the era before the First World War, was marked 'by the general belief that theoretical sociology would somehow play a major constructive role in the progressive development of our society; sociology had the grandiose ambitions of youth' (Charles H. Page, *Class and American Sociology*, New York, 1940, p. 249). Its current ambitions are certainly less grandiose.

members as well as in leaders of labor unions, so that they resemble one another more and more. Such a trend, although constantly challenged by contrary tendencies, strengthens labor as a new force in social life.

It is not that inequality has decreased. To the old discrepancies between the social power of single members of different social groups, further differences have been added. While unions dealing in certain categories of labor have been able to raise their prices, the whole weight of oppressive social power is felt by other categories, organized or unorganized. There is, furthermore, the cleavage between members of unions and those who for any one of various reasons are excluded from unions, between the people of privileged nations and those who, in this contracting world, are dominated not only by their own traditional elite, but also by the ruling groups of the industrially more developed countries. The principle has not changed.

At the present time, labor and capital are equally concerned with holding and extending their control. The leaders in both groups contend to an increasing extent that theoretical critique of society has become superfluous as a result of the tremendous technological progress that promises to revolutionize the conditions of human existence. The technocrats maintain that superabundance of goods produced on super-assembly lines will automatically eliminate all economic misery. Efficiency, productivity, and intelligent planning are proclaimed the gods of modern man; so-called 'unproductive' groups and 'predatory' capital are branded as the enemies of society.

It is true that the engineer, perhaps the symbol of this age, is not so exclusively bent on profitmaking as the industrialist or the merchant. Because his function is more directly connected with the requirements of the production job itself, his commands bear the mark of greater objectivity. His subordinates recognize that at least some of his orders are in the nature of things and therefore rational in a universal sense. But at bottom this rationality, too, pertains to domination, not reason. The engineer is not interested in understanding things for their own sake or for the sake of insight, but in accordance with their being fitted into a scheme, no matter how alien to their own inner structure; this holds for living beings as well as for inanimate things. The engineer's mind is that of industrialism in its streamlined form. His purposeful rule would make men an agglomeration of instruments without a purpose of their own.

The deification of industrial activity knows no limits. Relaxation comes to be regarded as a kind of vice so far as it is not necessary to assure

fitness for further activity. 'American philosophy,' says Moses F. Aronson, 'postulates the reality of an open and dynamic universe. A fluid universe is not a place to rest in, nor does it encourage the esthetic delight of passive contemplation. A world in constant process of unfolding stimulates the active imagination and invites the exercise of muscular intelligence.'* He feels that pragmatism 'reflects the characteristics of a frontier-nurtured, athletic mentality grappling with the perplexities engendered by the rising tide of industrialism swirling against the background of a rural economy.'†

However, the difference between the 'frontier-nurtured mentality' of the actual American pioneers and that of its modern propagators seems a glaring one. The pioneers themselves did not hypostatize means as ends. They embraced hard toil in their immediate struggle for survival; in their dreams they may well have fantasied about the pleasures of a less dynamic and much more restful universe. They probably made a value of 'the esthetic delight of passive contemplation' in their concepts of beatitude or in their ideal of a culture to be achieved.

Their latest epigoni, when they adopt an intellectual profession in the modern division of labor, extol the obverse values. By speaking of theoretical endeavors as 'muscular' and 'athletic,' and as in this sense a 'spontaneous native growth,' they are trying, as though with a twinge of bad conscience, to hold on to their heritage of the 'strenuous life' from the frontiersmen and also to assimilate their language to the activistic vocabulary of manual occupations, particularly of agricultural and industrial labor. They glorify co-ordination and uniformity even in the realm of ideas. Into the synthesis of American philosophy, Aronson writes, 'there entered, to be sure, a number of European ingredients. These foreign components, however, were taken up and fused into an autochthonous unity.'‡ The nearer these co-ordinators come to attaining the potentialities through which the earth could become a place of contemplation and delight, the more they persist, as conscious or unconscious followers of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in exalting the idea of the nation and the worship of eternal activity.

It is not technology or the motive of self-preservation that in itself accounts for the decline of the individual; it is not production *per se*, but

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* Cf. Charles Beard, *The American Spirit*, p. 666.
† Ibid. p. 665.
‡ Ibid.

the forms in which it takes place—the interrelationships of human beings within the specific framework of industrialism. Human toil and research and invention is a response to the challenge of necessity. The pattern becomes absurd only when people make toil, research, and invention into idols. Such an ideology tends to supplant the humanistic foundation of the very civilization it seeks to glorify. While the concepts of complete fulfilment and unrestrained enjoyment fostered a hope that unshackled the forces of progress, the idolization of progress leads to the opposite of progress. Arduous labor for a meaningful end may be enjoyed and even loved. A philosophy that makes labor an end in itself leads eventually to resentment of all labor. The decline of the individual must be charged not to the technical achievements of man or even to man himself—people are usually much better than what they think or say or do—but rather to the present structure and content of the 'objective mind,' the spirit that pervades social life in all its branches. The patterns of thought and action that people accept ready-made from the agencies of mass culture act in their turn to influence mass culture as though they were the ideas of the people themselves. The objective mind in our era worships industry, technology, and nationality without a principle that could give sense to these categories; it mirrors the pressure of an economic system that admits of no reprieve or escape.

As for the ideal of productivity, it must be observed that economic significance today is measured in terms of usefulness with respect to the structure of power, not with respect to the needs of all. The individual must prove his value to one or other of the groups engaged in the struggle for a greater share of control over the national and the international economy. Moreover, the quantity and quality of the goods or services he contributes to society is merely one of the factors determining his success.

Nor is efficiency, the modern criterion and sole justification for the very existence of any individual, to be confused with real technical or managerial skill. It inheres in the ability to be 'one of the boys,' to hold one's own, to impress others, to 'sell' oneself, to cultivate the right connections—talents that seem to be transmitted through the germ cells of so many persons today. The fallacy of technocratic thinking from St. Simon to Veblen and his followers has lain in underestimating the similarity of the traits that make for success in the various branches of production and business, and in confusing rational use of the means of production with the rational proclivities of certain of its agents.

If modern society tends to negate all the attributes of individuality, are

its members not compensated, it may be asked, by the rationality of its organization? The technocrats often maintain that when their theories are put into practice, depressions will become a thing of the past and basic economic disproportions will disappear; the whole productive mechanism will work smoothly according to blueprints. Actually, modern society is not so far from having realized the technocratic dream. The needs of the consumers as well as of the producers, which under the liberal market system made themselves felt in distorted and irrational forms, in a process culminating in depressions, can now to a great extent be forecast and satisfied or negated in accordance with the policies of economic and political leaders. The expression of human needs is no longer distorted by the dubious economic indicators of the market; instead, these needs are determined by statistics, and all kinds of engineers—industrial, technical, political—struggle to keep them under control. But if this new rationality is in one way closer to the idea of reason than the market system, it is in another way farther from it.

Dealings between the members of different social groups under the older system were really determined not by the market but by the unequal distribution of economic power; yet the transformation of human relations into objective economic mechanisms gave the individual, at least in principle, a certain independence. When unsuccessful competitors went to the wall or backward groups were reduced to misery under the liberalistic economy, they could preserve a sense of human dignity even though they were economically cast down, because responsibility for their plight could be thrown upon anonymous economic processes. Today individuals or entire groups may still suffer ruin through blind economic forces; but these are represented by better organized, more powerful elites. Although the interrelations of these dominant groups are subject to vicissitudes, they understand each other well in many respects. When concentration and centralization of industrial forces extinguish political liberalism in its turn, the victims are doomed in their entirety. Under totalitarianism, when an individual or group is singled out by the elite for discrimination, it is not only deprived of the means of livelihood, but its very human essence is attacked. American society may take a different course. However, the dwindling away of individual thinking and resistance, as it is brought about by the economic and cultural mechanisms of modern industrialism, will render evolution toward the humane increasingly difficult.

By making the watchword of production a kind of religious creed, by professing technocratic ideas and branding as 'unproductive' such groups

as do not have access to the big industrial bastions, industry causes itself and society to forget that production has become to an ever greater extent a means in the struggle for power. The policies of economic leaders, on which society in its present stage more and more directly depends, are dogged and particularistic, and therefore perhaps even blinder with respect to the real needs of society than were the automatic trends that once determined the market. Irrationality still molds the fate of men.

The age of vast industrial power, by eliminating the perspectives of a stable past and future that grew out of ostensibly permanent property relations, is in process of liquidating the individual. The deterioration of his situation is perhaps best measured in terms of his utter insecurity as regards his personal savings. As long as currencies were rigidly tied to gold, and gold could flow freely over frontiers, its value could shift only within narrow limits. Under present-day conditions the dangers of inflation, of a substantial reduction or complete loss of the purchasing power of his savings, lurk around the next corner. Private possession of gold was the symbol of bourgeois rule. Gold made the burgher somehow the successor of the aristocrat. With it he could establish security for himself and be reasonably sure that even after his death his dependents would not be completely sucked up by the economic system. His more or less independent position, based on his right to exchange goods and money for gold, and therefore on relatively stable property values, expressed itself in the interest he took in the cultivation of his own personality—not, as today, in order to achieve a better career or for any professional reason, but for the sake of his own individual existence. The effort was meaningful because the material basis of individuality was not wholly unstable. Although the masses could not aspire to the position of the burgher, the presence of a relatively numerous class of individuals who were genuinely interested in humanistic values formed the background for the kind of theoretical thought as well as for the type of manifestations in the arts that by virtue of their inherent truth express the needs of society as a whole.

The state's restriction of the right to possess gold is the symbol of a complete change. Even the members of the middle class must resign themselves to insecurity. The individual consoles himself with the thought that his government, corporation, association, union, or insurance company will take care of him when he becomes ill or reaches the retiring age. The various laws prohibiting private possession of gold symbolize the verdict against the independent economic individual. Under liberalism, the beggar was always an eyesore to the rentier. In the

age of big business both beggar and rentier are vanishing. There are no safety zones on society's thoroughfares. Everyone must keep moving. The entrepreneur has become a functionary, the scholar a professional expert. The philosopher's maxim, *Bene qui latuit, bene vixit,* is incompatible with modern business cycles. Everyone is under the whip of a superior agency. Those who occupy the commanding positions have little more autonomy than their subordinates; they are bound down by the power they wield.

Every instrumentality of mass culture serves to reinforce the social pressures upon individuality, precluding all possibility that the individual will somehow preserve himself in the face of all the atomizing machinery of modern society. The accent on individual heroism and on the self-made man in popular biographies and pseudo-romantic novels and films does not invalidate this observation.* These machine-made incentives to self-preservation actually accelerate the dissolution of individuality. Just as the slogans of rugged individualism are politically useful to large trusts in seeking exemption from social control, so in mass culture the rhetoric of individualism, by imposing patterns for collective imitation, disavows the very principle to which it gives lip service. If, in the words of Huey Long, every man can be a king, why cannot every girl be a movie queen, whose uniqueness consists in being typical?

The individual no longer has a personal history. Though everything changes, nothing moves. He needs neither a Zeno nor a Cocteau, neither an Eleatic dialectician nor a Parisian surrealist, to tell what the Queen in *Through the Looking Glass* means when she says, 'It takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place,' or what Lombroso's madman expressed in his beautiful poem:†

> Noi confitti al nostro orgoglio
> Come ruote in ferrei perni,
> Ci stanchiamo in giri eterni,
> Sempre erranti e sempre qui!

The objection that the individual, despite everything, does not entirely disappear in the new impersonal institutions, that individualism is as rugged and rampant in modern society as ever before, seems to miss the point. The objection contains a grain of truth, namely, the consideration

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*Cf. Leo Lowenthal: 'Biographies in Popular Magazines,' in *Radio Research, 1942–43*, New York, 1944, pp. 507–48.

† *The Man of Genius*, London, 1891, p. 366.

that man is still better than the world he lives in. Yet his life seems to follow a sequence that will fit any questionnaire he is asked to fill out. His intellectual existence is exhausted in the public opinion polls. Especially the so-called great individuals of today, the idols of the masses, are not genuine individuals, they are simply creatures of their own publicity, enlargements of their own photographs, functions of social processes. The consummate superman, against whom no one has warned more anxiously than Nietzsche himself, is a projection of the oppressed masses, King Kong rather than Caesar Borgia.* The hypnotic spell that such counterfeit supermen as Hitler have exercised derives not so much from what they think or say or do as from their antics, which set a style of behavior for men who, stripped of their spontaneity by the industrial processing, need to be told how to make friends and influence people.

The tendencies described have already led to the greatest catastrophe in European history. Some of the causes were specifically European. Others are traceable to profound changes in man's character under the influence of international trends. Nobody can predict with certainty that these destructive tendencies will be checked in the near future. However, there is increasing awareness that the unbearable pressure upon the individual is not inevitable. It is to be hoped that men will come to see that it springs not directly from the purely technical requirements of the production, but from the social structure. Indeed, the intensification of repression in many parts of the world in itself testifies to fear in face of the imminent possibility of change on the basis of the present development of productive forces. Industrial discipline, technological progress, and scientific enlightenment, the very economic and cultural processes that are bringing about the obliteration of individuality, promise—though the augury is faint enough at present—to usher in a new era in which individuality may re-emerge as an element in a less ideological and more humane form of existence.

Fascism used terroristic methods in the effort to reduce conscious human beings to social atoms, because it feared that ever-increasing disillusionment as regards all ideologies might pave the way for men to realize their own and society's deepest potentialities; and indeed, in some

* Edgar Allan Poe said about greatness: 'That individuals *have* so soared above the plane of their race, is scarcely to be questioned; but, in looking back through history for traces of their existence, we should pass over all biographies of "the good and the great," while we search carefully the slight records of wretches who died in prison, in Bedlam, or upon the gallows' (*The Portable Poe*, edited by Philip van Doren Stern, Viking Press, New York, 1945, pp. 660–61).

cases, social pressure and political terror have tempered the profoundly human resistance to irrationality—a resistance that is always the core of true individuality.

The real individuals of our time are the martyrs who have gone through infernos of suffering and degradation in their resistance to conquest and oppression, not the inflated personalities of popular culture, the conventional dignitaries. These unsung heroes consciously exposed their existence as individuals to the terroristic annihilation that others undergo unconsciously through the social process. The anonymous martyrs of the concentration camps are the symbols of the humanity that is striving to be born. The task of philosophy is to translate what they have done into language that will be heard, even though their finite voices have been silenced by tyranny.

V

On the Concept of Philosophy

The formalization of reason leads to a paradoxical cultural situation. On the one hand, the destructive antagonism of self and nature, an antagonism epitomizing the history of our civilization, reaches its peak in this era. We have seen how the totalitarian attempt to subdue nature reduced the ego, the human subject, to a mere tool of repression. All the other functions of the self, as expressed in general concepts and ideas, have been discredited. On the other hand, philosophical thinking, whose task it is to essay a reconciliation, has come to deny or to forget the very existence of the antagonism. What is called philosophy, together with all the other branches of culture, superficially bridges the chasm and thus adds to the dangers. An underlying assumption of the present discussion has been that philosophical awareness of these processes may help to reverse them.

Faith in philosophy means the refusal to permit fear to stunt in any way one's capacity to think. Until recently in Western history, society lacked sufficient cultural and technological resources for forging an understanding between individuals, groups, and nations. Today the material conditions exist. What is lacking are men who understand that they themselves are the subjects or the functionaries of their own oppression. Because all conditions for the development of such understanding exist, it is absurd to expect that the notion of the 'immaturity of the masses' is tenable. Moreover, the observer who views the social process even in the most backward parts of Europe will be obliged to admit that those who are led are at least as mature as the wretched, inflated little *Führers* whom they are asked to follow idolatrously. The realization that at this very moment everything depends upon the right use of man's autonomy should rally

those who have not been silenced to defend culture against threatened debasement at the hands of its conformist fair-weather friends or annihilation at the hands of the barbarians within the gates.

The process is irreversible. Metaphysical therapies that propose to turn back the wheel of history are, as has been said above in the discussion of neo-Thomism, vitiated by the very pragmatism they profess to abhor.

> The struggle is too late; and every means taken merely makes the disease worse; for the disease has seized the very marrow of spiritual life, viz., consciousness in its ultimate principle [*Begriff*], or its pure inmost nature itself. There is therefore no power left in conscious life to surmount the disease . . . It is then the memory alone that still preserves the dead form of the spirit's previous state, as a vanished history, vanished men know not how. And the new serpent of wisdom, raised on high before bending worshippers, has in this manner painlessly sloughed merely a shrivelled skin.*

Ontological revivals are among the means that aggravate the disease. Conservative thinkers who have described the negative aspects of enlightenment, mechanization, and mass culture have often tried to mitigate the consequences of civilization either by re-emphasizing old ideals or by pointing out new aims that could be pursued without the risk of revolution. The philosophy of the French counter-revolution and that of German prefascism are examples of the first-named attitude. Their critique of modern man is romanticist and anti-intellectualist. Other enemies of collectivism advance more progressive ideas, e.g. the idea of the confederation of Europe or that of political unity for the whole of the civilized world, as advocated by Gabriel Tarde† at the end of the nineteenth century and Ortega y Gasset‡ in our own time. Although their analyses of the objective mind of our era are most pertinent, their own educational conservatism is certainly one of its elements. Ortega y Gasset likens the masses to spoiled children§; the comparison appeals to just those sections of the masses that are most completely deprived of

* G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, transl. by J. B. Baillie, New York, 1931, pp. 564–5.

† Cf. *Les Lois de l'Imitation*, Engl. transl., *The Laws of Imitation*, New York, 1903, particularly pp. 184–8 and pp. 388–93.

‡ Cf. *La Rebelión de las Masas*, Engl. transl., *The Revolt of the Masses*, New York, 1932, particularly pp. 196–200.

§ Ibid. pp. 63–4.

individuality. His reproach that they are ungrateful to the past is one of the elements of mass propaganda and mass ideology. The very fact that his philosophy is slanted for popular availability, *i.e.*, its pedagogical character, nullifies it as philosophy. Theories embodying critical insight into historical processes, when used for panaceas, have often turned into repressive doctrines. As recent history teaches, this holds true for radical as well as for conservative doctrines. Philosophy is neither a tool nor a blueprint. It can only foreshadow the path of progress as it is marked out by logical and factual necessities; in doing so it can anticipate the reaction of horror and resistance that will be evoked by the triumphal march of modern man.

There is no definition of philosophy. Definition of it is identical with the explicit account of what it has to say. However, some remarks on both definitions and philosophy may further elucidate the role that the latter could play. They will also give opportunity to clarify further our use of such abstract terms as nature and spirit, subject and object.

Definitions acquire their full meanings in the course of a historical process. They cannot be used intelligently unless we humbly concede that their penumbrae are not easily penetrated by linguistic short-cuts. If, through fear of possible misunderstandings, we agree to eliminate the historical elements and to offer supposedly atemporal sentences as definitions, we deny ourselves the intellectual heritage bequeathed to philosophy from the beginning of thought and experience. The impossibility of such a complete disavowal is evidenced in the procedure of the most antihistorical 'physicalist' philosophy of our times, logical empiricism. Even its protagonists admit some undefinable terms of everyday usage into their dictionary of strictly formalized science, thus paying tribute to the historical nature of language.

Philosophy must become more sensitive to the muted testimonies of language and plumb the layers of experience preserved in it. Each language carries a meaning embodying the thought forms and belief patterns rooted in the evolution of the people who speak it. It is the repository of the variegated perspectives of prince and pauper, poet and peasant. Its forms and content are enriched or impoverished by the naive usage of every man. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that we can discover the essential meaning of a word by simply asking the people who use it. Public-opinion polls are of little avail in this search. In the age of formalized reason, even the masses abet the deterioration of concepts and ideas. The man in the street, or, as he is sometimes called today, the man

in the fields and factories, is learning to use words almost as schematically and unhistorically as the experts. The philosopher must avoid his example. He cannot talk about man, animal, society, world, mind, thought, as a natural scientist talks about a chemical substance: the philosopher does not have the formula.

There is no formula. Adequate description, unfolding the meaning of any of these concepts, with all its shades and its interconnections with other concepts, is still a main task. Here, the word with its half-forgotten layers of meaning and association is a guiding principle. These implications have to be re-experienced and preserved, as it were, in more enlightened and universal ideas. Today, one is too easily induced to evade complexity by surrendering to the illusion that the basic ideas will be clarified by the march of physics and technology. Industrialism puts pressure even upon the philosophers to conceive their work in terms of the processes of producing standardized cutlery. Some of them seem to feel that concepts and categories should leave their workshops clean-cut and looking brand-new.

> Hence definition renounces, of itself, the concept-terms properly so-called, which would be essentially principles of the subject-matter, and contents itself with *marks*, that is, with determinations in which *essentiality* for the object itself is a matter of indifference, and which are designed merely to be *distinguishing tokens* for an external reflection. A single *external* determinateness of this kind is so entirely inadequate to the concrete totality and the nature of its concept that its exclusive selection is beyond justification, nor could any one suppose that a concrete whole had its true expression and character in it.*

Each concept must be seen as a fragment of an inclusive truth in which it finds its meaning. It is precisely the building of truth out of such fragments that is philosophy's prime concern.

There is no royal road to definition. The view that philosophical concepts must be pinned down, identified, and used only when they exactly follow the dictates of the logic of identity is a symptom of the quest for certainty, the all-too-human impulse to trim intellectual needs down to pocket size. It would make it impossible to convert one concept into another without impairing its identity, as we do when we speak of a man

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* *Hegel's Logic of World and Idea (Being a Translation of the 2d and 3d Parts of the Subjective Logic) with Introduction on Idealism Limited and Absolute,* by Henry S. Macran, Oxford, 1929, p. 153 (sect. 3, chap. II).

or a nation or a social class as remaining identical, although its qualities and all the aspects of its material existence are undergoing change. Thus study of history may prove that the attributes of the idea of freedom have been constantly in process of transformation. The postulates of the political parties who fought for it may have been contradictory even in the same generation, and still there is the identical idea that makes all the difference in the world between these parties or individuals on the one hand and the enemies of freedom on the other. If it is true that we must know what freedom is in order to determine which parties in history have fought for it, it is no less true that we must know the character of these parties in order to determine what freedom is. The answer lies in the concrete outlines of the epochs of history. The definition of freedom is the theory of history, and vice versa.

The pinning-down strategy characteristic of and justified in natural science, and wherever practical use is the goal, manipulates concepts as though they were intellectual atoms. Concepts are pieced together to form statements and propositions, and these in turn are combined to form systems. Throughout, the atomic constituents of the system remain unchanged. They are felt to attract and repel one another everywhere in the mechanism, according to the familiar principles of traditional logic, the laws of identity, contradiction, *tertium non datur*, et cetera, that we use, almost instinctively, in every act of manipulation. Philosophy pursues a different method. True, it also employs these hallowed principles, but in its procedure this schematism is transcended, not by arbitrary neglect of it, but by acts of cognition in which logical structure coincides with the essential traits of the object. Logic, according to philosophy, is the logic of the object as well as of the subject; it is a comprehensive theory of the basic categories and relations of society, nature, and history.

The formalistic method of definition proves particularly inadequate when applied to the concept of nature. For to define nature and its complement, spirit, is inevitably to pose either their dualism or their unity, and to pose the one or the other as an ultimate, a 'fact,' while in truth these two fundamental philosophical categories are inextricably interconnected. A concept such as that of 'fact' can itself be understood only as a consequence of the alienation of human consciousness from extrahuman and human nature, which is in turn a consequence of civilization. This consequence, it is true, is strictly real: the dualism of nature and spirit can no more be denied in favor of their alleged original unity than the real historical trends reflected in this dualism can be reversed. To

assert the unity of nature and spirit is to attempt to break out of the present situation by an impotent *coup de force,* instead of transcending it intellectually in conformity with the potentialities and tendencies inherent in it.

In actual fact, every philosophy that ends in assertion of the unity of nature and spirit as an allegedly ultimate datum, that is to say, every kind of philosophical monism, serves to intrench the idea of man's domination of nature, the ambivalent character of which we have tried to show. The very tendency to postulate unity represents an attempt to consolidate the claim of spirit to total domination, even when this unity is in the name of the absolute opposite of spirit, nature: for nothing is supposed to remain outside the all-embracing concept. Thus even the assertion of the primacy of nature conceals within itself the assertion of the absolute sovereignty of spirit, because it is spirit that conceives this primacy of nature and subordinates everything to it. In view of this fact, it is a matter of little moment at which of the two extremes the tension between nature and spirit is resolved—whether unity is advocated in the name of absolute spirit, as in idealism, or in the name of absolute nature, as in naturalism.

Historically, these two contradictory types of thinking served the same purposes. Idealism glorified the merely existent by representing it as nevertheless spiritual in essence; it veiled the basic conflicts in society behind the harmony of its conceptual constructions, and in all its forms furthered the lie that elevates the existing to the rank of God, by attributing to it a 'meaning' that it has lost in an antagonistic world. Naturalism—as we have seen in the example of Darwinism—tends to a glorification of that blind power over nature which is supposed to have its model in the blind play of the natural forces themselves; it is almost always accompanied by an element of contempt for mankind—softened, it is true, by skeptical gentleness, the attitude of a physician shaking his head—a contempt that is at the bottom of so many forms of semi-enlightened thinking. When man is assured that he is nature and nothing but nature, he is at best pitied. Passive, like everything that is only nature, he is supposed to be an object of 'treatment,' finally a being dependent on more or less benevolent leadership.

Theories that fail to differentiate spirit from objective nature, and define it quasi-scientifically as nature, forget that spirit has also become non-nature, that, even if it were nothing but a reflection of nature, it still, by virtue of its having this character of reflection, transcends the *hic et nunc.*

Ruling out of this quality of spirit—that it is simultaneously identical with and different from nature—leads directly to the view that man is essentially nothing but an element and an object of blind natural processes. As an element of nature, he is like the earth of which he is made; as earth, he is of no consequence, by the standards of his own civilization—whose complicated, streamlined artifacts, automatons, and skyscrapers are in a sense evaluated in the circumstance that he is of no greater worth than the raw material of his futile metropolises.

The real difficulty in the problem of the relation between spirit and nature is that hypostatizing the polarity of these two entities is as impermissible as reducing one of them to the other. This difficulty expresses the predicament of all philosophical thinking. It is inevitably driven to abstractions such as 'nature' and 'spirit,' while every such abstraction implies a misrepresentation of concrete existence that ultimately affects the abstraction itself. For this reason, philosophical concepts become inadequate, empty, false, when they are abstracted from the process through which they have been obtained. The assumption of an ultimate duality is inadmissible—not only because the traditional and highly questionable requirement of an ultimate principle is logically incompatible with a dualistic construction, but because of the content of the concepts in question. The two poles cannot be reduced to a monistic principle, yet their duality too must be largely understood as a product.

Since the time of Hegel many philosophical doctrines have gravitated toward insight into the dialectical relation of nature and spirit. Only a few important examples of speculation on this topic may be mentioned here. F. H. Bradley's *One Experience* is supposed to indicate the harmony of the divergent conceptual elements. John Dewey's idea of experience is deeply related to Bradley's theory. Dewey, who in other passages, making the subject a part of nature, subscribes to naturalism *tout court*, calls experience 'something which is neither exclusive and isolated subject or object, matter or mind, nor yet one plus the other.'* Thus he shows that he belongs to the generation that evolved the *Lebensphilosophie*. Bergson, whose whole teaching seems to be an effort to overcome the antinomy, has maintained the unity in such concepts as *durée* and *élan vital*, and the separation in postulating a dualism of science and metaphysics and

* *Experience and Nature*, Chicago, 1925, p. 28.

correspondingly of nonlife and life. Georg Simmel* has developed the doctrine of the capacity of life to transcend itself. However, the concept of life that underlies all these philosophies denotes a realm of nature. Even when spirit is defined as the highest stage of life, as in Simmel's metaphysical theory, the philosophical problem is still decided in favor of a refined naturalism against which Simmel's philosophy is at the same time a constant protest.

Naturalism is not altogether in error. Spirit is inseparably related to its object, nature. This is true not only with regard to its origin, the purpose of self-preservation, which is the principle of natural life, and not only logically, in the sense that every spiritual act implies matter of some kind, or 'nature'; but the more recklessly spirit is posed as an absolute, the more is it in danger of retrogressing to pure myth and of modeling itself on precisely the mere nature that it claims to absorb in itself or even to create. Thus the most extreme idealistic speculations led to philosophies of nature and of mythology; the more that spirit, released from all restraint, tries to claim as its own product not only the forms of nature, as in Kantianism, but also its substance, the more does spirit lose its own specific substance, and the more do its categories become metaphors of the eternal repetition of natural sequences. The epistemologically insoluble problems of spirit make themselves felt in all forms of idealism. Although it is claimed for spirit that it is the justification or even source of all existence and of nature, its content is always referred to as something outside autonomous reason, even if only in the quite abstract form of the datum—this unavoidable aporia of all theory of knowledge testifies to the fact that the dualism of nature and spirit cannot be posed in the sense of a definition, as the classic Cartesian theory of the two substances would have it. On the one hand, each of the two poles has been torn away from the other by abstraction; on the other, their unity cannot be conceived and ascertained as a given fact.

The fundamental issue discussed in this book, the relation between the subjective and objective concepts of reason, must be treated in the light of the foregoing reflections on spirit and nature, subject and object. What has been referred to in Chapter I as subjective reason is that attitude of consciousness that adjusts itself without reservation to the alienation between subject and object, the social process of reification, out of fear

*Cf. particularly *Lebensanschauung* and *Der Konflikt der Modernen Kultur*, Munich and Leipzig, 1918.

that it may otherwise fall into irresponsibility, arbitrariness, and become a mere game of ideas. The present-day systems of objective reason, on the other hand, represent attempts to avoid the surrender of existence to contingency and blind hazard. But the proponents of objective reason are in danger of lagging behind industrial and scientific developments, of asserting meaning that proves to be an illusion, and of creating reactionary ideologies. Just as subjective reason tends to vulgar materialism, so objective reason displays an inclination to romanticism, and the greatest philosophical attempt to construe objective reason, Hegel's, owes its incomparable force to its critical insight regarding this danger. As vulgar materialism, subjective reason can hardly avoid falling into cynical nihilism; the traditional affirmative doctrines of objective reason have an affinity with ideology and lies. The two concepts of reason do not represent two separate and independent ways of the mind, although their opposition expresses a real antinomy.

The task of philosophy is not stubbornly to play the one against the other, but to foster a mutual critique and thus, if possible, to prepare in the intellectual realm the reconciliation of the two in reality. Kant's maxim, 'The critical path alone is still open,' which referred to the conflict between the objective reason of rationalistic dogmatism and the subjective reasoning of English empiricism, applies even more pertinently to the present situation. Since isolated subjective reason in our time is triumphing everywhere, with fatal results, the critique must necessarily be carried on with an emphasis on objective reason rather than on the remnants of subjectivistic philosophy, whose genuine traditions, in the light of advanced subjectivization, now in themselves appear as objectivistic and romantic.

However, this emphasis on objective reason does not mean what would be called, in the phraseology of the warmed-over theologies of today, a philosophical decision. For just like the absolute dualism of spirit and nature, that of subjective and objective reason is merely an appearance, although a necessary appearance. The two concepts are interlaced, in the sense that the consequence of each not only dissolves the other but also leads back to it. The element of untruth lies not simply in the essence of each of the two concepts, but in the hypostatization of either one as against the other. Such hypostatization results from the basic contradiction in the human condition. On the one hand, the social need of controlling nature has always conditioned the structure and forms of man's thinking and thus given primacy to subjective reason. On the other hand,

society could not completely repress the idea of something transcending the subjectivity of self-interest, to which the self could not help aspiring. Even the divorcing and formal reconstruction of the two principles as separate rest on an element of necessity and historical truth. By its self-critique, reason must recognize the limitations of the two opposite concepts of reason; it must analyze the development of the cleavage between the two, perpetuated as it is by all the doctrines that tend to triumph ideologically over the philosophical antinomy in an antinomic world.

Both the separateness and the interrelatedness of the two concepts must be understood. The idea of self-preservation, the principle that is driving subjective reason to madness, is the very idea that can save objective reason from the same fate. Applied to concrete reality, this means that only a definition of the objective goals of society that includes the purpose of self-preservation of the subject, the respect for individual life, deserves to be called objective. The conscious or unconscious motive that inspired the formulation of the systems of objective reason was the realization of the impotence of subjective reason with regard to its own goal of self-preservation. These metaphysical systems express in partly mythological form the insight that self-preservation can be achieved only in a supra-individual order, that is to say, through social solidarity.

If one were to speak of a disease affecting reason, this disease should be understood not as having stricken reason at some historical moment, but as being inseparable from the nature of reason in civilization as we have known it so far. The disease of reason is that reason was born from man's urge to dominate nature, and the 'recovery' depends on insight into the nature of the original disease, not on a cure of the latest symptoms. The true critique of reason will necessarily uncover the deepest layers of civilization and explore its earliest history. From the time when reason became the instrument for domination of human and extra-human nature by man—that is to say, from its very beginnings—it has been frustrated in its own intention of discovering the truth. This is due to the very fact that it made nature a mere object, and that it failed to discover the trace of itself in such objectivization, in the concepts of matter and things not less than in those of gods and spirit. One might say that the collective madness that rages today, from the concentration camps to the seemingly most harmless mass-culture reactions, was already present in germ in primitive objectivization, in the first man's calculating contemplation of the world as a prey. Paranoia, the madness that builds logically constructed theories of persecution, is not merely a parody of reason, but

is somehow present in any form of reason that consists in the mere pursuit of aims.

Thus the derangement of reason goes far beyond the obvious malformations that characterize it at the present time. Reason can realize its reasonableness only through reflecting on the disease of the world as produced and reproduced by man; in such self-critique, reason will at the same time remain faithful to itself, by preserving and applying for no ulterior motive the principle of truth that we owe to reason alone. The subjugation of nature will revert to subjugation of man, and vice versa, as long as man does not understand his own reason and the basic process by which he has created and is maintaining the antagonism that is about to destroy him. Reason can be more than nature only through concretely realizing its 'naturalness'—which consists in its trend to domination—the very trend that paradoxically alienates it from nature. Thus also, by being the instrument of reconciliation, it will be more than an instrument. The changes of direction, the advances and retrogressions of this effort, reflect the development of the definition of philosophy.

The possibility of a self-critique of reason presupposes, first, that the antagonism of reason and nature is in an acute and catastrophic phase, and, second, that at this stage of complete alienation the idea of truth is still accessible.

The shackling of man's thoughts and actions by the forms of extremely developed industrialism, the decline of the idea of the individual under the impact of the all-embracing machinery of mass culture, create the prerequisites of the emancipation of reason. At all times, the good has shown the traces of the oppression in which it originated. Thus the idea of the dignity of man is born from the experience of barbarian forms of domination. During the most ruthless phases of feudalism, dignity was an attribute of might. Emperors and kings wore halos. They demanded and received veneration. Anyone who was negligent in obeisance was punished, anyone who committed *lèse majesté* was put to death. Today, freed from its bloody origin, the notion of the dignity of the individual is one of the ideas defining a humane organization of society.

The concepts of law, order, justice, and individuality have had a similar evolution. Medieval man took refuge from justice by appealing to mercy. Today we fight for justice, a justice universalized and transvaluated, embracing equity and mercy. From the Asiatic despots, the Pharaohs, the Greek oligarchs, down to the merchant princes and *condottieri* of the Renaissance and the fascist leaders of our own era, the value of

the individual has been extolled by those who had an opportunity of developing their individualities at the expense of others.

Again and again in history, ideas have cast off their swaddling clothes and struck out against the social systems that bore them. The cause, in large degree, is that spirit, language, and all the realms of the mind necessarily stake universal claims. Even ruling groups, intent above all upon defending their particular interests, must stress universal motifs in religion, morality, and science. Thus originates the contradiction between the existent and ideology, a contradiction that spurs all historical progress. While conformism presupposes the basic harmony of the two and includes the minor discrepancies in the ideology itself, philosophy makes men conscious of the contradiction between them. On the one hand it appraises society by the light of the very ideas that it recognizes as its highest values; on the other, it is aware that these ideas reflect the taints of reality.

These values and ideas are inseparable from the words that express them, and philosophy's approach to language is indeed, as has been indicated above, one of its most crucial aspects. The changing contents and stresses of words record the history of our civilization. Language reflects the longings of the oppressed and the plight of nature; it releases the mimetic impulse (cf. p. 78 ff.). The transformation of this impulse into the universal medium of language rather than into destructive action means that potentially nihilistic energies work for reconciliation. This makes the fundamental and intrinsic antagonism between philosophy and fascism. Fascism treated language as a power instrument, as a means of storing knowledge for use in production and destruction in both war and peace. The repressed mimetic tendencies were cut off from adequate linguistic expression and employed as means for wiping out all opposition. Philosophy helps man to allay his fears by helping language to fulfil its genuine mimetic function, its mission of mirroring the natural tendencies. Philosophy is at one with art in reflecting passion through language and thus transferring it to the sphere of experience and memory. If nature is given the opportunity to mirror itself in the realm of spirit, it gains a certain tranquillity by contemplating its own image. This process is at the heart of all culture, particularly of music and the plastic arts. Philosophy is the conscious effort to knit all our knowledge and insight into a linguistic structure in which things are called by their right names. However, it expects to find these names not in isolated words and sentences—the method intended in the doctrines of oriental sects, and

which can still be traced in the biblical stories of the baptizing of things and men—but in the continuous theoretical effort of developing philosophical truth.

This concept of truth—the adequation of name and thing—inherent in every genuine philosophy, enables thought to withstand if not to overcome the demoralizing and mutilating effects of formalized reason. The classical systems of objective reason, such as Platonism, seem to be untenable because they are glorifications of an inexorable order of the universe and therefore mythological. But it is to these systems rather than to positivism that we owe gratitude for preserving the idea that truth is the correspondence of language to reality. Their proponents were wrong, however, in thinking that they could achieve this correspondence in eternalistic systems, and in failing to see that the very fact that they were living amidst social injustice prevented the formulation of a true ontology. History has proved all such attempts illusory.

Unlike science, ontology, the heart of traditional philosophy, attempts to derive the essences, substances, and forms of things from some universal ideas that reason imagines it finds in itself. But the structure of the universe cannot be derived from any first principles that we discover in our own minds. There are no grounds for believing that the more abstract qualities of a thing should be considered primary or essential. Perhaps more than any other philosopher, Nietzsche has realized this fundamental weakness of ontology.

> The other idiosyncrasy of philosophers [he says] is no less dangerous; it consists in confusing the last and the first things. They place that which makes its appearance last . . . the 'highest concept,' that is to say, the most general, the emptiest, the last cloudy streak of evaporating reality, at the beginning as the beginning. This again is only their manner of expressing their veneration: the highest thing must not have grown out of the lowest, it must not have grown at all . . . Thus they attain to their stupendous concept 'God.' The last, most attenuated and emptiest thing is postulated as the first thing, as the absolute cause, as 'ens realissimum.' Fancy humanity having to take the brain diseases of morbid cobweb spinners seriously!—And it has paid dearly for having done so.*

* 'The Twilight of the Idols,' in *Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. by Oscar Levy, New York, 1925, p. 19.

Why should the logically prior or the more general quality be accorded ontological precedence? Concepts ranked in the order of their generality mirror man's repression of nature rather than nature's own structure. When Plato or Aristotle arranged concepts according to their logical priority, they did not so much derive them from the secret affinities of things as unwittingly from power relations. Plato's depiction of the 'great chain of being' barely conceals its dependence on traditional notions of the Olympian polity and thus on the social reality of the city-state. The logically prior is no nearer the core of a thing than the temporally prior; to equate priority either with the essence of nature or of man means to debase humans to the crude state to which the power motive tends to reduce them in reality, to the status of mere 'beings.' The major argument against ontology is that the principles man discovers in himself by meditation, the emancipating truths that he tries to find, cannot be those of society or of the universe, because neither of these is made in the image of man. Philosophical ontology is inevitably ideological because it tries to obscure the separation between man and nature and to uphold a theoretical harmony that is given the lie on every hand by the cries of the miserable and disinherited.

Distorted though the great ideals of civilization—justice, equality, freedom—may be, they are nature's protestations against her plight, the only formulated testimonies we possess. Toward them philosophy should take a dual attitude. (1) It should deny their claims to being regarded as ultimate and infinite truth. Whenever a metaphysical system presents these testimonies as absolute or eternal principles, it exposes their historical relativity. Philosophy rejects the veneration of the finite, not only of crude political or economic idols, such as the nation, the leader, success, or money, but also of ethical or esthetic values, such as personality, happiness, beauty, or even liberty, so far as they pretend to be independent ultimates. (2) It should be admitted that the basic cultural ideas have truth values, and philosophy should measure them against the social background from which they emanate. It opposes the breach between ideas and reality. Philosophy confronts the existent, in its historical context, with the claim of its conceptual principles, in order to criticize the relation between the two and thus transcend them. Philosophy derives its positive character precisely from the interplay of these two negative procedures.

Negation plays a crucial role in philosophy. The negation is double-edged—a negation of the absolute claims of prevailing ideology and of the brash claims of reality. Philosophy in which negation is an element is not

to be equated with skepticism. The latter uses negation in a formalistic and abstract way. Philosophy takes existing values seriously but insists that they become parts of a theoretical whole that reveals their relativity. Inasmuch as subject and object, word and thing, cannot be integrated under present conditions, we are driven, by the principle of negation, to attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates. The skeptic and positivist schools of philosophy find no meaning in general concepts that would be worth salvaging. Oblivious to their own partiality, they fall into unresolvable contradictions. On the other hand, objective idealism and rationalism insist, above all, upon the eternal meaning of general concepts and norms, regardless of their historical derivations. Each school is equally confident of its own thesis and hostile to the method of negation inseparably bound up with any philosophical theory that does not arbitrarily stop thinking at some point in its course.

Some cautions against possible misconstruction are in order. To say that the essence or the positive side of philosophical thought consists in understanding the negativity and relativity of the existing culture does not imply that the possession of such knowledge constitutes, in itself, the overcoming of this historical situation. To assume this would be to confound true philosophy with the idealistic interpretation of history, and to lose sight of the core of dialectical theory, namely, the basic difference between the ideal and the real, between theory and practice. The idealistic identification of wisdom, however deep, with fulfilment—by which is meant the reconciliation of spirit and nature—enhances the ego only to rob it of its content by isolating it from the external world. Philosophies that look exclusively to an inner process for the eventual liberation end as empty ideologies. As has been remarked earlier, Hellenistic concentration on pure inwardness allowed society to become a jungle of power interests destructive of all the material conditions prerequisite for the security of the inner principle.

Is activism, then, especially political activism, the sole means of fulfilment, as just defined? I hesitate to say so. This age needs no added stimulus to action. Philosophy must not be turned into propaganda, even for the best possible purpose. The world has more than enough propaganda. Language is assumed to suggest and intend nothing beyond propaganda. Some readers of this book may think that it represents propaganda against propaganda, and conceive each word as a suggestion, slogan, or prescription. Philosophy is not interested in issuing commands. The intellectual situation is so confused that this statement itself may in turn be interpreted as offering foolish advice against obeying

any command, even one that might save our lives; indeed, it may even be construed as a command directed against commands. If philosophy is to be put to work, its first task should be to correct this situation. The concentrated energies necessary for reflection must not be prematurely drained into the channels of activistic or nonactivistic programs.

Today even outstanding scholars confuse thinking with planning. Shocked by social injustice and by hypocrisy in its traditional religious garb, they propose to wed ideology to reality, or, as they prefer to say, to bring reality closer to our heart's desire, by applying the wisdom of engineering to religion. In the spirit of August Comte, they wish to establish a new social catechism. 'American Culture,' writes Robert Lynd,

> if it is to be creative in the personality of those who live it, needs to discover and to build prominently into its structure a core of richly evocative common purposes which have meaning in terms of the deep personality needs of the great mass of the people. Needless to say, the theology, eschatology and other familiar aspects of traditional Christianity need not have any place in such an operating system. It is the responsibility of a science that recognizes human values as a part of its data to help to search out the content and modes of expression of such shared loyalties. In withholding its hand science becomes a partner to those people who maintain outworn religious forms because there is nothing else in sight.*

Lynd seems to look at religion in somewhat the manner in which he looks at social science itself—which, in his view, 'will stand or fall on the basis of its serviceability to men as they struggle to live.'† Religion becomes pragmatistic.

Despite the genuine progressive spirit of such thinkers, they miss the core of the problem. The new social catechisms are even more futile than the revivals of Christian movements. Religion, in its traditional form or as a progressive social cult, is regarded, if not by the great masses, at least by its authorized spokesmen, as an instrument. It cannot regain status by propagating new cults of the present or future community, of the state, or of the leader. The truth it seeks to convey is compromised by its pragmatic end. Once men come to speak of religious hope and despair in terms of 'deep personality needs,' emotionally rich common sentiments, or scientifically tested human values, religion is meaningless for them.

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* *Knowledge for What*, Princeton, 1939, p. 239.
† Ibid. p. 177.

Even Hobbes's prescription that religious doctrines be swallowed like pills will be of little avail. The language of the recommendation disavows what it means to recommend.

Philosophical theory itself cannot bring it about that either the barbarizing tendency or the humanistic outlook should prevail in the future. However, by doing justice to those images and ideas that at given times dominated reality in the role of absolutes—e.g. the idea of the individual as it dominated the bourgeois era—and that have been relegated in the course of history, philosophy can function as a corrective of history, so to speak. Thus ideological stages of the past would not be equated simply with stupidity and fraud—the verdict brought against medieval thought by the philosophy of the French Enlightenment. Sociological and psychological explanation of earlier beliefs would be distinct from philosophical condemnation and suppression of them. Though divested of the power they had in their contemporary setting, they would serve to cast light upon the current course of humanity. In this function, philosophy would be mankind's memory and conscience, and thereby help to keep the course of humanity from resembling the meaningless round of the asylum inmate's recreation hour.

Today, progress toward utopia is blocked primarily by the complete disproportion between the weight of the overwhelming machinery of social power and that of the atomized masses. Everything else—the widespread hypocrisy, the belief in false theories, the discouragement of speculative thought, the debilitation of will, or its premature diversion into endless activities under the pressure of fear—is a symptom of this disproportion. If philosophy succeeds in helping people to recognize these factors, it will have rendered a great service to humanity. The method of negation, the denunciation of everything that mutilates mankind and impedes its free development, rests on confidence in man. The so-called constructive philosophies may be shown truly to lack this conviction and thus to be unable to face the cultural debacle. In their view, action seems to represent the fulfilment of our eternal destiny. Now that science has helped us to overcome the awe of the unknown in nature, we are the slaves of social pressures of our own making. When called upon to act independently, we cry for patterns, systems, and authorities. If by enlightenment and intellectual progress we mean the freeing of man from superstitious belief in evil forces, in demons and fairies, in blind fate—in short, the emancipation from fear—then denunciation of what is currently called reason is the greatest service reason can render.

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